

The Lost Stories of Warwick Deeping

Volumes I-IX

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Volume Five

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Prolog

October

STORYTELLER
OCTOBER 1923

By Warwick Deeping

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"Allons ! Forward !"



MONSIEUR GRANDET and Madame Everard had not spoken to each other for five years.

They lived door by door in the village of Le Plessiel, and their gardens and orchards went hand in hand down hill to the willows and the river. A high hedge separated the two properties, and both Monsieur Grandet and Madame Everard had encouraged the growth of that hedge. There were two thin places in the hedge where elm trees had been cut down. Monsieur Grandet kept his tumbril tilted against one of these gaps; Madame Everard had obscured the other with a hen-house.

Old Grandet was a veteran of 1870, a tall, lean, handsome old man with a white head and the face of a Cæsar. He was very kind, very obstinate, and extraordinarily proud.

Fanchette Everard was a pretty little woman with soft grey hair, brown eyes and a quick colour. She had the fire of a Gascon and the stubbornness of a Fleming. Thirty years ago Gilles Grandet had wanted to marry her. They had been in love with each other, but something had intervened.

Le Plessiel could never quite understand that feud.

As Mme. Margot, of the *Coq d'Or*, put it: "Two such decent people. Grandet has the manners of an *aristo*. And Fanchette is so pretty, my dear, although she is five and fifty. Something of a spitfire, of course."

M. Crampon, the schoolmaster, had a theory of his own: "*Tonnerre*. What do people quarrel about? Why, about nothing. Your rabbits get out and eat your neighbour's winter greens. Your children have a squabble, and François tears Marie's apron. That's how the thing begins. And some people will never be put in the wrong. They shut their doors on each other. That's how it happens."

He was right.

There were two children to be considered—Mme. Everard's Jules and Grandet's Suzanne. As youngsters they had assumed the attitude of their elders, and even thrown rotten apples and dirt at each other over the hedge. Somewhat later Suzanne's maturity and Jules's shyness held them scornfully interested yet aloof. They looked at each other steadily when they met in the street, but they did not speak.

Suzanne was big, fair and comely, with frank eyes and a laughing mouth. Jules was dark and slim. His mother believed him to be delicate, but he passed for the army, and that was how the trouble began.

A recruit's life is not of the noblest, and Jules was a "sensitive" and a child of romance. He came on leave to Le Plessiel in the spring, saw Suzanne hanging out her linen in old Grandet's orchard, her head, the head of a Guinevere in that little world of white blossom and green mystery, and straightway fell in love with her. Grandet's wagon happened to be out on the farm; the gap in the hedge was unscreened, and Jules's shyness dared the ordeal.

"Why is it that we never speak to each other. Mademoiselle Suzanne?"

Surprised, she turned and stared at him.

"So it is little Jules. And a soldier too!"

She was a tease, but there was no malice in her, and young Everard had courage.

"One has got to go away to realize how beautiful things are," he said.

"Indeed!"

"Barrack life is so ugly, you know. It is very green and peaceful here."

That new friendship had budded quite pleasantly before it was caught and shrivelled. M. Grandet and Mme. Everard made the discovery simultaneously, and the habit of years held.

"Suzanne! Come here!"

"Jules! Jules! I will speak to you in the house."

It was absurd, preposterous, and youth knew it to be such, but parental prejudices are very obstinate, especially in France. The autocrats had their way. The custom of the country was with them. Jules was very fond of his little mother, and Grandet had always found it difficult not to spoil Suzanne. Old people are very tenacious and very strong. Jules went back to his regiment without speaking five words to Grandet's daughter.

But he left her with three words, and they were words that counted: "I love you."

Old Grandet had once spoken those very words to Fanchette Everard.

The war came in the midst of Jules's second leave, and the tragedy of it won him Suzanne Grandet. Their little romance began and ended in Grandet's orchard. They said good-bye there in the dusk, and Jules marched off to the station.

His mother went with him, a brave little mother with shining eyes and a white face. On the way he told her the truth, and told it her very gently like a young man confessing on Passion Sunday.

"Mother, I love Suzanne. I cannot help it."

She was silent a moment, her upper lip quivering in the facing of this double sacrifice.

"Does M. Grandet know?"

"Not unless Suzanne has told him."

"He is a hard man, Jules."

"Who could be hard on us just now, mother?"

"Not I, Jules. What God wills God wills. But Gilles Grandet must speak to me."

He kissed her.

"Dear little mother. Grandet is a Frenchman. Everything will be different from to-day."

Gilles Grandet was listening to a similar confession, his forehead puckered and his blue eyes grave and hard. Suzanne had always been so much his, and he had loved her with some of the spirit of a miser. The irony of the thing annoyed him. Fanchette's son sneaking in and taking his girl away from him!

He tried to argue and temporise, but Suzanne's youth held to the generous issue. His words were shabby, senile and unconvincing even to himself.

"You will go and speak to Mme. Everard, father?"

He shrugged.

"She can come and see me. You will have more money than her boy."

"Think. She is all alone; she has lost Jules; you have me. Let us forget the old days."

Gilles Grandet put on his Sunday clothes and went as an unwilling, stiff-necked man who was fated to make a mess of so delicate a business. Mme. Everard met him with the steady eyes and the quiet manner of a woman who had made an effort to put away all pride. He sat in her best chair, awkward and uneasy, obstinately set on keeping the affair as formal as possible.

"Your boy has been making a fool of me. I suppose we must make the best of the business."

The mother in Fanchette Everard took fire at once.

"You regard it as a calamity, monsieur! *Mon Dieu!* Your girl is

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a good girl, I believe, but Jules might have pleased me better."

Old Grandet's bronzed face hardened.

"What! He is conferring a favour on us, is he? Let me tell you, madame, that Suzanne's *dot* is too big for him."

There was no quenching the fire after that. Both parents felt their sacred pride affronted, and they quarrelled with bitter politeness and a ferocity that fought for son and daughter. Old Grandet got up and bowed at the end of it and walked out of the house.

"I would rather lose my land," he said, "than that my daughter should marry your son, madame."

"I would rather lose my son," she flashed at him, "and he is worth more than your land."

Gilles Grandet found Suzanne with her arms elbow-deep in the washtub. One glance at his red face and stern eyes made her guess what had happened.

"You have quarrelled with Mme. Everard, my father?"

Her voice levelled an accusation, and he had not expected to be accused.

"The woman was insolent. We will have nothing more to do with such people."

Suzanne gave a pathetic shrug of the shoulders.

"It is hard for us all and so foolish. It is harder for Mme. Everard than for you."

Old Grandet lost his temper a second time.

"So I'm at fault, am I? A nice girl to take sides against her own father. A Grandet should have more pride."

"Will such pride help us to keep back the Prussians? We should be proud of men such as Jules, a man who is little more than a boy, and yet who has gone out with his heart all flame."

"You will have nothing more to do with the puppy!" he said savagely.

Suzanne looked at him, drew her

hands out of the washtub and dried them on her apron.

"I cannot stay in such a house," she said, "when all France will be bleeding. I am going to Paris. I am a strong girl and I can nurse."

"I forbid it," he answered.

"But God wills it. Are we going to keep our little coward prides when France is at war?"

Suzanne had her father's obstinacy, and the flower of her youth was a fine flame in those days. Grandet would not surrender, nor would she. He was still all laced up in buckram, in the habits and prejudices of years. He had forgotten how to weep, how to feel afraid, what the nights were like when a man could not sleep because of some great anguish, what it felt like to listen to the cries of a woman who was in labour with his child. He had been very strong, very healthy, and had known no pain.

"I forbid it!" he said.

He kept on repeating that phrase like a parrot till he came in from the fields one morning and found Suzanne gone. The house had been swept, the beds made, the crockery all washed and put away. She had left a letter for him on the kitchen table.

"If I had waited to say good-bye, my father, and asked you to kiss me, I might have been weak. No one must be weak these days. France calls us."

Old Grandet sat down and thought it over. He did not move for half an hour, and his face looked as though it had been carved out of a block of oak.

It was in November that the news came to Le Plessiel that Jules Everard had been killed. The postmaster carried it himself to Jules's mother, and found her mending some of the boy's civilian clothes.

The postmaster stood there, hat in hand, and Fanchette Everard guessed the reason of his coming.

By Warwick Deeping

Other women in Le Plessiel had passed through the same ordeal.

"So these clothes will not be needed. Is that what you have come to tell me, M. Valery?"

"Your courage is as great as your sacrifice," said he, with tears in his eyes.

She began to fold up the clothes, her teeth set, yet feeling that her heart was breaking.

"So that is the end of it. Well, I will put them away. He was always a good boy, was Jules."

The postmaster made a bolt for it.

"Damn! And a widow's son, too, and the only one! Tsst! Germany!"

In the street he met old Grandet, and felt like quarrelling with him.

"Bad news again, monsieur."

"Indeed."

"Fanchette Everard has lost her son."

Gilles Grandet's eyes did not betray any emotion.

"*C'est la guerre*," he said stolidly.

The postmaster had his chance to get rid of some emotion.

"You have no son, monsieur. You think yourself safe. *Bien!* France is a mother, monsieur, and the woman in there is France."

He marched off, head in air, swinging his shoulders, leaving old Grandet staring at the ground.

The soul of this French peasant felt a little uneasy and a little puzzled. He was conscious of no fear, no anxiety, nor had he any thought of fate touching him as it had touched Fanchette Everard. His attitude began by being purely impersonal. Perhaps he was even a little relieved by the idea that the barrier between himself and Suzanne had been taken away. It was a tragedy, of course, and the poor woman was to be pitied. He was quite ready to be a good neighbour, and after all he had wanted to marry her many years ago.

But Gilles Grandet had changed. A shadow of something seemed to lie across his life. He began to be conscious of a vague unrest, of a dissatisfaction with the familiar world

that had satisfied him so well. He was lonely, and loneliness bred mistrust of all the solid life that had seemed so sound and sure. The war began to worry him; he had thought of its happening a long way off, but now it seemed very near.

"Suzanne must come back."

Yes, that was it. He wanted his girl back; he was beginning to starve for lack of something to love. He would write to her, not a tyrant's letter, but he would tell her he was lonely and that poor Jules was dead. She was a good girl and she would come.

He sat up late concocting that letter, and when he had finished it he put it aside on the mantelshef to be posted in the morning. But that letter was never posted, for next day he heard that Suzanne was dead. She had died of pneumonia in a French hospital, the hospital where she had worked as a nurse.

No one saw Gilles Grandet for two days. His door remained shut, and he did not go beyond the stable and the cow-house. The curé and the schoolmaster came to speak with him, and they found him in the stable sitting on the edge of the manger beside his old horse. His eyes stared and his face was like the face of an image.

"God has taken what He gave you, M. Grandet."

"Get out!" he said roughly.

"There is no God."

He remained in that sullen, brooding state for three days. The man's humanity was dying for lack of passionate expression. His anguish was hard, savage and rebellious, the anguish of a thrifty, laborious and selfish man whose life had suddenly lost its purpose.

On the fourth morning, when old Grandet opened the door leading into the yard and the garden, he saw something lying on the oak stool that Suzanne had used for her milking. Somebody had left a little bunch of lavender with a half-sheet of paper folded round the stalks. Grandet picked up the bunch, un-

rolled the paper, saw that something was written on it, and this was what he read:

"From one who has lost a son for France to one who has lost a daughter. Know that my words, Gilles, were the words of an angry woman. Let us forget them. Let us remember that our children loved each other."

Old Grandet stared at the bunch of lavender, holding it in the palm of one brown hand. His face had a puzzled and troubled look, like the face of a man who was conscious of some new pain.

Presently he turned back into the house and put the bunch of lavender in a vase on the mantelshelf. The letter he stuffed into his pocket. It accused him, but he did not fly into a rage over it; the voice of Suzanne the woman seemed to speak in that letter.

He filled his pipe, lit it, and went and stood in the doorway to think.

"I sent her no message when her boy was killed."

A voice—a new voice—was speaking to him.

"Lonely? *Mon Dieu!* She must be very lonely. And I am a man; I should be stronger than a woman. You have behaved very badly, Gilles Grandet; you have behaved like a bad Frenchman."

He raised his head and saw the wet gleam of the rising sun above the apple trees. It seemed to light up something in his blue eyes and to soften that weather-beaten face of his. He straightened up suddenly, squared his shoulders, pulled his pipe out of his mouth and nodded.

"*Allons!* Forward!"

He marched out into the orchard and stood considering something. His eyes fell on the cart blocking the thin place in the hedge. He went and pulled the cart away and pushed through into Mme. Everard's orchard. His eyes were the eyes of the peasant, the man of the

land, the man who knew what was needed and what was lacking. The woodstack at the back of the garden fence was pathetically small, a few logs, a few faggots, not enough for three weeks. He walked up and had a look at the garden; it was poorly stocked as to winter greens, weeds were rampant, and it needed digging. The fruit trees in the orchard cried out for some hard cutting and pruning. There were a number of broken palings in the fence on the side of the fields.

"Of course, she is poor; she must be very poor. There is the pension, a pittance. All this must be seen to."

He returned to his own place, fetched a billhook, a hurdle and a couple of stakes and made a neat gate in the hedge where the wagon had stood. He was a little shy, a little guilty, and he kept glancing at Fanchette's cottage, but she did not show herself, and he escaped undiscovered.

Gilles Grandet carted wood that day. He had a quantity ready cut in that copse of his across the stream.

Grandet was up before daylight next morning, carrying logs and faggots to Fanchette's woodstack. His thoughts, however, went farther than the piling up of mere fuel. When Mme. Everard opened her back door she found two big boxes standing there, filled with kindling and sawn logs. On the top of the pile of logs rested a sprig of lavender.

Her eyes filled with tears.

"It is the spirit of the children," she said to herself, "the spirit of Jules and Suzanne."

She pondered the matter all day, discovered the hurdle that had been placed in the hedge, and that night Gilles Grandet found a little letter thrust under his front door.

"M. Grandet," it said, "I thank you. I am a poor woman with little but bunches of lavender to give. Yet it may be that my needle may be of

use. When my hands are busy I think less."

Lying on the next box of logs that was left at her doorway she found a coat that needed patching at the elbows, some socks to be darned and two shirts that lacked buttons. Cloth, thread and buttons were there also, neatly packed in an old cigar box.

She smiled a little.

"*Tiens!* But he was always methodical."

This pathetic interplay went on for weeks without the players meeting. Old Grandet was very shy, and his shyness affected Mme. Everard. Once or twice she caught a glimpse of him digging in her garden, but she kept aloof, her eyes very bright and shining; and once she was nearly caught leaving some bread she had baked for him on the table inside his door.

One sunny day early in February she had heard the sound of boughs being lopped in the orchard. She stole out and found Grandet at work on one of her old trees, standing on a ladder, the sunlight shining on his white hair.

She made up her mind to speak to him.

"Good morning, M. Grandet."

He had not heard her crossing the grass, and in his surprise he dropped the pruning-saw he was using.

"Good morning, Mme. Everard."

"It is very good of you to take so much trouble," she said, picking up the saw and handing it to him.

"It is no trouble at all," he answered, suddenly aware of her brown eyes and pretty grey hair; "it ought to have been done before, but I shall manage it."

"You must get up very early these days."

"It is good to get up early."

"Ah, if you do not sleep well, yes."

He nodded his head and resumed his work, and from that day they consented to speak to each other

once or twice a week, but they were always very formal and polite.

In due course spring came to the village of Le Plessiel, spring with a stealthy shimmer of early green, fruit buds blushing pink and a rich rankness in the orchards and meadows. Birds sang; the cuckoo called, flying from copse to copse. There were masses of marsh-marigolds in the stream at the end of Mme. Everard's garden. Old Grandet had planted wallflowers under her window, and the first scent of them on the first warm day was like a pain over the heart.

The greenness, the beauty, the wild pathos of a blackbird's song! Growth everywhere, joy, a mating of birds, flowers in the meadows. The youth and exultation of it all hurt the woman who had lost her son and the man who had lost his daughter. Fanchette Everard sat at her window, lips aquiver, hands listless in her lap. Old Grandet's eyes had a dim look; he walked about slowly, rather like a man who had lost his way.

One perfect evening he marched out with his hoe over his shoulder to draw some seed drills in Mme. Everard's garden.

The white of the orchard was merging into green. Slants of yellow sunlight struck between the trees and painted yellow patterns on the vivid grass.

Grandet had reached the hurdle in the hedge when he drew up and stood absolutely still.

Over yonder Fanchette Everard was leaning against one of the apple trees, her hands over her face. She was weeping, weeping like a woman who had conquered herself for weeks and had then been surprised and broken by some passionate and sudden anguish. There was something so childish and lost and grievous about her weeping that old Grandet began to tremble and a thickness came into his throat.

He understood. It was the spring, the mockery of these green leaves, the loneliness, the thought of the

boy who was dead. Had he not felt it himself, waited to hear Suzanne singing and tried to lose himself again in his work? But there was a new emotion in him on this rare evening in May, a great yearning that had been gathering like the sap in an old tree.

He dropped the hoe, pulled back the hurdle and crossed the grass.

"Fanchette!"

She let her hands fall and stood trembling.

"Gilles! But I did not know."

Old Grandet looked at her with the sun on his white head.

"It is quite wrong, quite wrong," he said huskily, "and it is I who have been in the wrong all these years. You are such a little thing, Fanchette, and it is I who should be looking after you."

She began to weep again, very much like a child.

"I'm so lonely, Gilles. The boy is dead, but my heart is not dead with him. You see, he used to play in the orchard. He had his swing over there. And do you remember how—how your girl used to sing, Gilles?"

Old Grandet's eyes were wet.

"*Mon Dieu!* Don't cry like that, Fanchette. See here, I want to look after you, take care of you. What have I been doing all these years?"

He got one of his brown arms round her, and her head came to rest on his shoulder.

"But I am an old woman, Gilles."

"And I'm not a boy, am I? Come, don't tremble so, little Fanchette. Just hold on to old Gilles. He is going to take care of you."

They stood there like young lovers, and presently, in the fall of the dusk, Fanchette's calmness returned and a child's smile came into her eyes.

"You won't quarrel with me, Gilles?"

"Quarrel! How absurd! That cantankerous duffer old Grandet—let me tell him a thing or two. And now *allons*, Fanchette, will you honour me by walking into the house?"

He was bending and offering her his arm, his blue eyes shining, the old courtier, the kindly man alive once more.

"Should I walk into your house, Gilles, or should you walk into mine?"

"Whichever you please, Mme. Grandet."

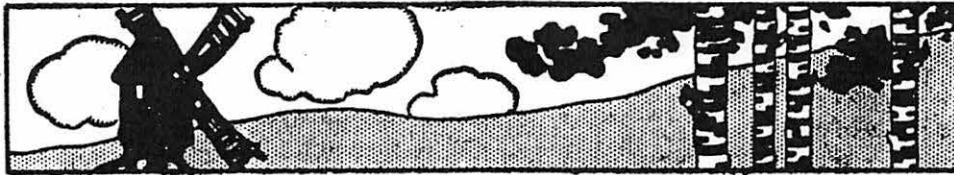
"Gilles!"

"I've given up quarrelling."

She pressed his arm.

"Gilles, then I will walk into yours."

WARWICK DEEPING



THRIFT

GARNER all your memories,
Sift the chaff and store the grain,
Weary years may bud and fall
Ere your fields are gold again.

Pleasure's famine cannot harm
One who walks foresighted ways
With a quiet granary
Full of happy yesterdays.

JANE SAVILLE.

Of a lovers' quarrel and how it was healed

By WARWICK DEEPING

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"Not unless Suzanne has told him."

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"You will have nothing more to do with the puppy!" he said savagely.

Suzanne looked at him, drew her hands out of the washtub and dried them on her apron.

"I cannot stay in such a house," she said. "when all France will be bleeding. I am going to Paris. I am a strong girl and I can nurse."

"I forbid it," he answered.

"But God wills it. Are we going to keep our little coward prides when France is at war?"

Suzanne had her father's obstinacy, and the flower of her youth was a fine flame in those days. Grandet would not surrender, nor would she. He was still all laced up in buckram, in the habits and prejudices of years. He had forgotten how to weep, how to feel afraid, what the nights were like when a man could not sleep because of some great anguish, what it felt like to listen to the cries of a woman who was in labour with his child. He had been very strong, very healthy, and had known no pain.

"I forbid it!" he said.

He kept on repeating that phrase like a parrot till he came in from the fields one morning and found Suzanne gone. The house had been swept, the beds made, the crockery all washed and put away. She had left a letter for him on the kitchen table.

If I had waited to say good-bye, my father, and asked you to kiss me, I might have been weak. No one must be weak these days. France calls us.

Old Grandet sat down and thought it over. He did not move for half an hour, and his face looked as though it had been carved out of a block of oak.

It was in November that the news came to Le Plessiel that Jules Everard had been killed. The postmaster carried it himself to Jules's mother, and found her mending some of the boy's civilian clothes.

The postmaster stood there, hat in hand, and Fanchette Everard guessed the reason of his coming. Other women in Le Plessiel had passed through the same ordeal.

"So these clothes will not be needed. Is that what you have come to tell me, M. Valery?"

"Your courage is as great as your sacrifice," said he, with tears in his eyes.

She began to fold up the clothes, her teeth set, yet feeling that her heart was breaking.

"So that is the end of it. Well, I will put them away. He was always a good boy, was Jules!"

The postmaster made a bolt for it.

"Damn! And a widow's son, too, and the only one! Tst! Germany!"

In the street he met old Grandet, and felt like quarrelling with him.

"Bad news again, monsieur."

"Indeed."

"Fanchette Everard has lost her son."

Gilles Grandet's eyes did not betray any emotion.

"*C'est la guerre*," he said stolidly.

The postmaster had his chance to get rid of some emotion.

"You have no son, monsieur. You think yourself safe. *Bien!* France is a mother, monsieur and the woman in there is France."

He marched off, head in air, swinging his shoulders, leaving old Grandet staring at the ground.

The soul of this French peasant felt a little uneasy and a little puzzled. He was conscious of no fear, no anxiety, nor had he any thought of fate touching him as it had touched Fanchette Everard. His attitude began by being purely impersonal. Perhaps he was even a little relieved by the idea that the barrier between himself and Suzanne had been taken away. It was a tragedy, of course, and the poor woman was to be pitied. He was quite ready to be a good neighbour, and after all he had wanted to marry her many years ago.

But Gilles Grandet had changed. A shadow of something seemed to lie across his life. He began to be conscious of a vague unrest, of a dissatisfaction with the familiar world that had satisfied him so well. He was lonely, and loneliness bred mistrust of all the solid life that had seemed so sound and sure. The war began to worry him; he had thought of its happening a long way off, but now it seemed very near.

"Suzanne must come back."

Yes, that was it. He wanted his girl back; he was beginning to starve for lack of something to love. He would write to

her, not a tyrant's letter, but he would tell her he was lonely and that poor Jules was dead. She was a good girl and she would come.

He sat up late concocting that letter, and when he had finished it he put it aside on the mantelshelf to be posted in the morning. But that letter was never posted, for next day he heard that Suzanne was dead. She had died of pneumonia in a French hospital, the hospital where she had worked as a nurse.

No one saw Gilles Grandet for two days. His door remained shut, and he did not go beyond the stable and the cow-house. The curé and the schoolmaster came to speak with him, and they found him in the stable sitting on the edge of the manger beside his old horse. His eyes stared and his face was like the face of an image.

"God has taken what He gave you, M. Grandet."

"Get out!" he said roughly. "There is no God."

He remained in that sullen, brooding state for three days. The man's humanity was dying for lack of passionate expression. His anguish was hard, savage and rebellious, the anguish of a thrifty, laborious and selfish man whose life had suddenly lost its purpose.

On the fourth morning, when old Grandet opened the door leading into the yard and the garden, he saw something lying on the oak stool that Suzanne had used for her milking. Somebody had left a little bunch of lavender with a half-sheet of paper folded round the stalks. Grandet picked up the bunch, unrolled the paper, saw that something was written on it, and this was what he read:

From one who has lost a son for France to one who has lost a daughter. Know that my words, Gilles, were the words of an angry woman. Let us forget them. Let us remember that our children loved each other.

Old Grandet stared at the bunch of lavender, holding it in the palm of one brown hand. His face had a puzzled and troubled look, like the face of a man who was conscious of some new pain.

Presently he turned back into the house and put the bunch of lavender in a vase on the mantelshelf. The letter he stuffed into his pocket. It accused him, but he did not fly into a rage over it; the voice of Suzanne the woman seemed to speak in that letter.

He filled his pipe, lit it, and went and stood in the doorway to think.

"I sent her no message when her boy was killed."

A voice—a new voice—was speaking to him.

"Lonely? *Mon Dieu!* She must be very lonely. And I am a man; I should be stronger than a woman. You have behaved very badly, Gilles Grandet; you have behaved like a bad Frenchman."

He raised his head and saw the wet gleam of the rising sun above the apple trees. It seemed to light up something in his blue eyes and to soften that weather-beaten face of his. He straightened up suddenly, squared his shoulders, pulled his pipe out of his mouth and nodded.

"*Allons! Forward!*"

HE marched out into the orchard and stood considering something. His eyes fell on the cart blocking the thin place in the hedge. He went and pulled the cart away and pushed through into Mme. Everard's orchard. His eyes were the eyes of the peasant, the man of the land, the man who knew what was needed and what was lacking. The woodstack at the back of the garden fence was pathetically small, a few logs, a few faggots, not enough for three weeks. He walked up and had a look at the garden; it was poorly stocked as to winter greens, weeds were rampant, and it needed digging. The fruit trees in the orchard cried out for some hard cutting and pruning. There were a number of broken palings in the fence on the side of the fields.

"Of course she is poor; she must be very poor. There is the pension, a pittance. All this must be seen to."

He returned to his own place, fetched a billhook, a hurdle and a couple of stakes and made a neat gate in the hedge where the wagon had stood. He was a little shy, a little guilty, and he kept glancing at Fanchette's cottage, but she did not show herself, and he escaped undiscovered.

Gilles Grandet carted wood that day. He had a quantity ready cut in that copse of his across the stream.

Grandet was up before daylight next morning carrying logs and faggots to Fanchette's woodstack. His thoughts, however, went farther than the piling up of mere

fuel. When Mme. Everard opened her back door she found two big boxes standing there, filled with kindling and sawn logs. On the top of the pile of logs rested a sprig of lavender.

Her eyes filled with tears.

"It is the spirit of the children," she said to herself, "the spirit of Jules and Suzanne."

She pondered the matter all day, discovered the hurdle that had been placed in the hedge, and that night Gilles Grandet found a little letter thrust under his front door.

"M. Grandet," it said, "I thank you. I am a poor woman with little but bunches of lavender to give. Yet it may be that my needle may be of use. When my hands are busy I think less."

Lying on the next box of logs that was left at her doorway she found a coat that needed patching at the elbows, some socks to be darned and two shirts that lacked buttons. Cloth, thread and buttons were there also, neatly packed in an old cigar box.

She smiled a little.

"*Tiens!* But he was always methodical."

This pathetic interplay went on for weeks without the players meeting. Old Grandet was very shy, and his shyness affected Mme. Everard. Once or twice she caught a glimpse of him digging in her garden, but she kept aloof, her eyes very bright and shining; and once she was nearly caught leaving some bread she had baked for him on the table inside his door.

One sunny day early in February she had heard the sound of boughs being lopped in the orchard. She stole out and found Grandet at work on one of her old trees, standing on a ladder, the sunlight shining on his white hair.

She made up her mind to speak to him.

"Good morning, M. Grandet."

He had not heard her crossing the grass, and in his surprise he dropped the pruning-saw he was using.

"Good morning, Mme. Everard."

"It is very good of you to take so much trouble," she said, picking up the saw and handing it to him.

"It is no trouble at all," he answered, suddenly aware of her brown eyes and pretty grey hair; "it ought to have been done before, but I shall manage it."

"You must get up very early these days."

"It is good to get up early."

"Ah, if you do not sleep well, yes."

He nodded his head and resumed his

work, and from that day they consented to speak to each other once or twice a week, but they were always very formal and polite.

In due course spring came to the village of Le Plessiel, spring with a stealthy shimmer of early green, fruit buds blushing pink and a rich rankness in the orchards and meadows. Birds sang; the cuckoo called, flying from copse to copse. There were masses of marsh-marigolds in the stream at the end of Mme. Everard's garden. Old Grandet had planted wallflowers under her window, and the first scent of them on the first warm day was like a pain over the heart.

The greenness, the beauty, the wild pathos of a blackbird's song! Growth everywhere, joy, a mating of birds, flowers in the meadows. The youth and exultation of it all hurt the woman who had lost her son and the man who had lost his daughter. Fanchette Everard sat at her window, lips aquiver, hands listless in her lap. Old Grandet's eyes had a dim look; he walked about slowly, rather like a man who had lost his way.

One perfect evening he marched out with his hoe over his shoulder to draw some seed drills in Mme. Everard's garden.

The white of the orchard was merging into green. Slants of yellow sunlight struck between the trees and painted yellow patterns on the vivid grass.

Grandet had reached the hurdle in the hedge when he drew up and stood absolutely still.

Over yonder Fanchette Everard was leaning against one of the apple trees, her hands over her face. She was weeping, weeping like a woman who had conquered herself for weeks and had then been surprised and broken by some passionate and sudden anguish. There was something so childish and lost and grievous about her weeping that old Grandet began to tremble and a thickness came into his throat.

He understood. It was the spring, the mockery of these green leaves, the loneliness, the thought of the boy who was dead. Had he not felt it himself, waited to hear Suzanne singing and tried to lose himself again in his work? But there was a new emotion in him on this rare evening in May, a great yearning that had been gathering like the sap in an old tree.

He dropped the hoe, pulled back the hurdle and crossed the grass.

"Fanchette!"

She let her hands fall and stood trembling.

"Gilles! But I did not know."

Old Grandet looked at her with the sun on his white head.

"It is quite wrong, quite wrong," he said huskily, "and it is I who have been in the wrong all these years. You are such a little thing, Fanchette, and it is I who should be looking after you."

She began to weep again, very much like a child.

"I'm so lonely, Gilles. The boy is dead, but my heart is not dead with him. You see, he used to play in the orchard. He had his swing over there. And do you remember how—how your girl used to sing, Gilles?"

Old Grandet's eyes were wet.

"*Mon Dieu!* Don't cry like that, Fanchette. See here, I want to look after you, take care of you. What have I been doing all these years?"

He got one of his brown arms round her, and her head came to rest on his shoulder.

"But I am an old woman, Gilles."

"And I'm not a boy, am I? Come, don't tremble so, little Fanchette. Just hold on to old Gilles. He is going to take care of you."

They stood there like young lovers, and presently, in the fall of the dusk, Fanchette's calmness returned and a child's smile came into her eyes.

"You won't quarrel with me, Gilles?"

"Quarrel! How absurd! That cantankerous duffer old Grandet—let me tell him a thing or two. And now *allons*, Fanchette, will you honour me by walking into the house?"

He was bending and offering her his arm, his blue eyes shining, the old courtier, the kindly man alive once more.

"Should I walk into your house, Gilles, or should you walk into mine?"

"Whichever you please, Mme. Grandet."

"Gilles!"

"I've given up quarrelling."

She pressed his arm.

"Gilles, then I will walk into yours."



Love's Secret

NEVER seek to tell thy love,
Love that never told can be,
For the gentle wind doth move
Silently, invisibly.

I told my love, I told my love,
I told her all my heart,
Trembling, cold, in ghastly fears.
Ah! she did depart!

Soon after she was gone from me,
A traveller came by,
Silently, invisibly:
He took her with a sigh.

WILLIAM BLAKE.

A CHRISTMAS VICTORY

ABOUT 3.30 p.m. on December 23rd, Mr. Arthur Tancred drove into Helensea. Preferring life to be docketed and a little adventurous, he had not reserved a room at any of the hotels. It was a mild and moist December and the sun was setting over the sea in a welter of kindling clouds.

Tancred stopped his car outside three hotels on the sea-front, the Grand, the Queen's, and the Albany, but none of these could accommodate him. People were being patriotic and Helensea contemplated a crowded Christmas.

With the sun sunk in the sea, the parade pulsing with lights, Tancred took counsel of a policeman and was directed to a garage. There was no lock-up available, and Tancred had to shove his car into a large and ill-lit shed. The garage attendant was sympathetic. At all events, the gentleman could leave his car.

"Want to go out again tonight, sir?"

"That depends upon whether I can get a bed. I have booked the principal hotels. All full."

"Bad luck, sir."

"Do you happen to know of a place?"

"You might try Clovelly, sir."

"Far?"

"No, round in Victoria Square, sir. Five minutes."

"I'll leave my stuff here and try Clovelly."

Directed by the attendant, Tancred discovered Victoria Square without much difficulty. Its architecture was Regency. It had an iron-railed, euonymus-hedged garden in the centre. Clovelly stood at the top of the square, and consisted of three white houses joined together, with green balconies and rusticated cornice.

Tancred found himself in Clovelly's lounge. It was very full of people and animation and tea-tables. Obviously Clovelly took its Christmas with intimate enthusiasm. It was

the sort of place to which the same people came year after year, and where everybody knew everybody else, and became very gay and maty in paper caps after the Christmas dinner.

In walking towards the hotel office, Tancred almost collided with a large person in plus-fours. In fact, had not Tancred side-stepped, the collision would have occurred, for the large person had continued upon his way as though he had expected Tancred to get out of it.

"Sorry, sir."

Irony did not penetrate.

"All right."

Tancred was amused. He had come to Helensea to be amused. And who was the Imperial Person in plus-fours? But a bedroom was the need of the moment, and he approached the lady in black who was seated in the office.

"Excuse me. Have you a room?"

The lady left her ledger. She was a little casual with Tancred.

"A single room?"

"Yes."

"We have one room. Mr. Betts had reserved it, but we have just had a wire to say that he is down with 'flu.'"

Tancred was not interested in Mr. Betts and his indisposition.

"What sort of room?"

"Fourth floor."

"Can I see it?"

He could. It was not a sumptuous chamber; in fact, it might have been described as an attic, and it faced north. But it had advantages. It would be reasonably quiet, and ponderous people would not undress overhead at one o'clock in the morning. He returned below, announced his decision, and was asked to register, and in the hotel ledger he described himself as Mr. James Arthur of London.

His luggage? Oh, he had left it in his car at a garage. He would stroll round to the garage and collect it, and that was what he did, not troubling to extract his car from the crowd of Christmas cars.

He reappeared in the lounge of Clovelly carrying one large suit-case and a smaller edition, and the "lounge" observed him. It was not impressed by the appearance of a stranger

arriving his own luggage. It liked discussing strangers, and decided that Tancred was no great addition to the party, a tall-looking young man and rather shabby.

There was no porter available at the moment, and the lift was in use, so Tancred proceeded to carry his own luggage up the stairs. He was youngish—thirty-five—and perhaps much younger than he looked. Besides, this meekness was all part of the picture, for when you wish to observe and study your fellow humans it behoves you to appear harmless and secure. Clovelly promised to be an admirable human zoo, full of middle-class mammals, and much more to his purpose in the Grand or the Queen's.

Half-way up the stairs to the fourth floor he met a girl coming down. Obviously he was an obstruction, and he stood aside with his luggage to let her pass.

"Please come down."

She had paused. She was a tall girl with red-brown hair and a pale face. There was something about her face that interested him. It had a queer, cold, unfriendly look. Badger? No, not exactly. Its secret expression was no more complex than the adjectives "plain" or "pretty".

He looked at his two suit-cases, and for some strange reason his expression changed. Perhaps she liked his voice; perhaps he had reason for feeling less fierce and farouche in the presence of a quiet and obscure person who was struggling on the fourth floor with his own luggage.

"That's all right. One gives way on hills."

"Thanks. I'm rather on low gear, but please—take the

she smiled, looked straight into his face with intelligent eyes, and humoured him.

"Go up to the fourth floor."

He said, "I've come up all three," and, letting her pass by, took his way to No. 51.

Clovelly dined at seven-thirty, and it was Clovelly's tradition that Christmas week dinner-jackets should be compulsory. Tancred was given the most uncomfortable seat in the room, close to the door, where people brushed the back of his chair and draughts prevailed. Room 51 was bracketed with such a table. Tancred saw the person of the plus-four suit seated in state with two ladies at a table in the bow window. Mr. Podmore

had reserved for him each Christmas Clovelly's special suite on the first floor and the table in the bow window. He was one of those large, full-throated and ominous men who, with sallow assurance, proceed to dominate any assembly and occasion. He took charge of Clovelly's social affairs rather like an auctioneer conducting a sale. He could be bluff, genial, and truculent, an arrogant black-and-white bull of a man.

Mr. Podmore had wine in an ice-bucket. Mr. Podmore's women suggested to Tancred flasks of chianti, or hams in cold storage, but highly decorated hams. The rest of the room was good English, in patches; substantial and somewhat elderly couples, two bright young men, three rather flashy young women. But, for the moment, Tancred was interested in the table next to him. At it was seated the girl he had met on the stairs, a thin, white-haired man who looked ill, and an elderly woman in black who looked worried.

Parents and daughter, so Tancred supposed. Also, his impression was that they did not belong to Clovelly. They had not that air of jocund and well-fed assurance. They did not converse. And Tancred noticed that the man ate very slowly, as though the business of feeding had become conscious and an effort. Yes, he looked a very sick man, and his wife was sad about something.

As for the girl, she seemed to express aloofness and defiance. She had her back to Tancred, but there was something in the set of her head and shoulders that intrigued him. She looked at the Clovelly crowd as though confronting it without appearing to give it individual scrutiny. And to Tancred she suggested a creature with a temperament, surveying a hostile audience, and sustained by some secret sense of her ultimate share in the drama.

Afterwards, things happened in the lounge. Tancred, who was the first to leave the dining-room, found an armchair in a recessed corner. He had already entrenched himself when the girl and her people appeared and, tending towards that corner, saw that it was occupied. Tancred was up at once.

"So sorry—I'm afraid I have stolen your particular place."

The two women smiled on him; the man gave a kind of gentle, puzzled look. At the moment he was mainly concerned with the business of walking. It was a kind of careful shuffle.

He held himself any moment.

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He held himself like some brittle thing that might break at any moment.

"Oh, please don't move."

Tancred was collecting a second armchair.

"I'm the last arrival. I take any spare perch."

But he remained in the corner. He became—so to speak—part of that particular group. These sad and quiet people attracted him. So did the girl. They began to talk.

The lounge filled. Mr. Podmore appeared with a note-book and an air of considerable importance. Mr. Podmore had responsibilities.

He was the high-priest presiding over Clovelly's Christmas festivities, the promoter of its programme.

Tancred glanced at the girl.

"Who's our friend? He looks like a successful book-maker."

He saw at once that she liked Mr. Podmore no more than he did.

"Something in the City."

Mr. Podmore was surrounded by the two young men and the three brassy young women.

"Oh, Mr. Podmore—where do we crash to on Boxing Day?"

"Bigbury, my dear."

"And who is scratch?"

"Modesty forbids—"

Apparently he was collecting entries for some event. In fact, on Boxing Day Clovelly was to indulge in a mild Round the Houses motor-race of its own. It was to be a handicap affair, with Mr. Podmore's Detroit Straight Eight at scratch. There would be a concert—dancing—but the road-race to Bigbury Rings and back was Clovelly's particular sensation.

Mr. Podmore's flat blue eyes discovered Tancred. He crossed the lounge with note-book and pencil.

"Have you a car, sir?"

Yes, Tancred had a car. Then would he like to enter his car for the Clovelly Boxing Day Binge?

"I'm afraid my car might not be in your class."

Mr. Podmore did not question this modesty. He extended patronage.

"It's a handicap event. What have you got? A Milton Minor?"

Tancred accepted the accusation. As a matter of fact, he did own a Milton Minor, and had christened it his country pram.

"What year, sir?"

"I'm afraid it's three years old and rather—decrepit."

"Oh, we'll put you in the front with Mr. Meaker's old Grimsby."

"Thanks so much."

"What name?"

"James Arthur."

With an air of condescension Mr. Podmore recorded the name and car in his note-book.

"We assemble in the square at ten sharp, on Boxing Day."

"Thanks awfully," said Tancred.

Mr. Podmore faced about and went to collect other entries. He ignored the Flemming family, Tancred's companions. They did not possess a car, not even a Milton Minor. They were obscure, aloof, unsociable people who had come down by train, and third-class at that.

Tancred found the girl observing Mr. Podmore's broad and prosperous back.

"A car-minded person," he said. "By the way, you wouldn't consent to be—my passenger?"

She looked at him appraisingly.

"You said your car—"

He smiled at her whimsically.

"May be a dark chariot." He turned to the two elders. "Forgive me for behaving like a buccaneer. I'm really quite a responsible person. Would you all come?"

Miss Flemming was looking at him curiously.

"All of us—in a Milton Minor?"

"I can take four."

But the elder Flemmings refused, not from unfriendliness, but for reasons of age, temperament, and necessity. And Tancred understood. The sick man was not fit for such festivals. He began to wonder why they were here.

Tancred had promised himself a quiet night in No. 51, but No. 52 contained two people, and the dividing-wall seemed to be of lath and plaster. There were voices, movements, and Tancred got the impression that one of his neighbours was in pain. Also, he recognized the voices, quiet, sensitive voices. On normal occasions he would have been irritated

but somehow the next door moved waiting for the son sleep was, perhaps, with compassion.

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but somehow the sense of stress and of suffering in the room next door moved him to other feelings. He lay quite still, waiting for the sounds to cease, and when he did fall asleep, sleep was, perhaps, more satisfying, because of its association with compassion.

It was to be a mild and sunny Christmas, and next morning Tancred saw the various Clovelly cars parked in the square, for that was the hotel's privilege, and Tancred, who had a feeling for cars, inspected the parade. It was not a *de luxe* display, and Mr. Podmore's Detroit Straight Eight, a large saloon brilliantly blue, was undoubtedly the sensation. Mr. Podmore was sitting in the car waiting for his women. He nodded at Tancred, the mere master of a Milton Minor. Tancred strolled to the window.

"Some car, sir."

"Oh, not so bad. She can do seventy with seven up."

"Eats up petrol, though."

Mr. Podmore indulged in a gesture.

"When you run a car like this you won't worry about the juice."

"No," said Tancred. "I suppose not."

But he had sighted the Flemming girl in Clovelly's doorway. She was dressed for going out, and Tancred put himself in her path.

"Just looking at the car parade. Walking?"

"Yes." She had the air of a young woman bracing herself against a north-east wind. "I'm just going down to the chemist's."

"I'm going that way too."

At the bottom of Alexandra Square she asked him that question.

"Where have I seen you before?"

"Have you?"

"Sure of it."

He smiled at her whimsically.

"Perhaps I'm a type. I don't think we can have seen each other before—I should not have forgotten."

But they began to see a good deal of each other during the Christmas festivities, though her father did not appear at the Christmas dinner. Clovelly improvised a dance, but neither Tancred nor Iris Flemming joined it. She would not have described herself as the devoted daughter; that sort of mush

was out of date, but she had sent her mother out to a concert in the afternoon and had sat reading to her father. She would have said that he had been a very good friend to her, and that as a doomed man and a poor one he moved her to fierce compassion.

While the hotel danced, Tancred and Miss Flemming walked up and down the sea-front by moonlight. They had begun to tell each other things, though three-fourths of the story was hers.

"One doesn't gush about one's parents. But he has been such a decent old thing. He tried to give me my chance, and now that he won't live long——"

"Nothing to be done?"

"Nothing. Mother will have about seventy pounds a year. Decent people don't seem to make money."

Tancred looked at the moon.

"Yes, perhaps that's true—but isn't it dangerous to generalize? So—you came down here——?"

"Oh, it was my idea, and my party. Six months' savings. And now I'm out of a job. But look here, I'm doing a damned personal whine."

"I've done them, too, in my time. But what is your—job?"

"The stage."

They had reached the end of the parade, and they paused by the railings to look at the sea.

"That explains it."

"How?"

"I implied that I hadn't seen you before. I have. You were in 'June Thunder'."

"Yes. It only ran a month."

"You ought to have been in 'The Laughing Lady'."

"A Tancred play. No such luck."

"Why not?"

"Things haven't happened that way with me. I understudied June Hardcastle in 'The Tyrant'. She was in a mood one night, and I had to go on. She was in a worse mood next day. Someone told her that I had done rather well."

"And she got you sacked?"

"Yes."

"That's June all over."

And then he realized that he had said a foolish thing.

"I mean the"

"Is that what"

"I was."

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Other
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yard other

All clear
the big car
Mr. Podmore
the queue.

"I mean that's gossip. Even a lawyer's clerk hears gossip."
"Is that what you are?"

"I was."

Did she believe him? And did it matter? They returned to the hotel, she to go up to her people's room, he to the writing-room to clear off some correspondence that he had brought with him. Three very conversational ladies shared the room with him, and he was compelled to listen. "Brass Nobs, without the Brass, that's what they are." He gathered that they were discussing the Flemmings. A very lean and yellow-haired woman had brought the phrase back with her from a cruise. It would appear that the ship had contained certain people who were separative and unmaty—probably for the sake of personal peace—and the maty majority had christened them the Brass Nobs. But there had been other people on the boat—"Awful people, my dear. And so vulgar and friendly. We had to make them understand that we..." Tancred found himself scribbling on a sheet of paper, and what he had scribbled was, "You sanguinary, brass-headed fool."

But Boxing Day was to be *Der Tag*. Tancred breakfasted early and then walked round to the garage. The Bigbury Rings parade was at ten, and it was his intention to join the parade about five minutes before zero hour. He could steal up and attach himself and his car to the assembly. Iris had promised to be ready.

He had not had his car out since his arrival, and at the garage he was surprised to find that it had been removed from the cattle-pen and put in a lock-up, and it was explained to Tancred by the man in charge that one of the lock-ups had not been claimed, and that the boss had come along and ordered Tancred's car to be moved into private quarters.

"It only just took her, sir. She must be eighteen over-all. The Boss wouldn't have her left out there."

"I'm much obliged. Have you time to check the tyre pressures for me? I shall want the tank filled."

Other people had come to claim their cars, but when Tancred drove the big grey sports coupé out into the garage yard other men stood about and stared.

All Clovelly seemed in the Square when Tancred brought the big car rolling noiselessly on its silver-and-blue disc wheels. Mr. Podmore's Detroit Eight had been parked at the tail of the queue, and Tancred placed his car behind Mr. Podmore's.

The contrast was instant and stimulating. Tancred's thoroughbred, with its beautiful lines and soft colouring, made Mr. Podmore's car look pretentious and cheap.

Tancred got out of the coupé and walked towards the hotel doorway. He met Mr. Podmore coming out, a Mr. Podmore, to whom somebody had passed the news, "There's a marvellous car outside." It is probable that some people might find pleasure in the deflating of Mr. Podmore. Tancred had seen Iris Flemming on the steps. He ignored Mr. Podmore.

"Afraid I might be late. Oh yes, I've looked up the route on the map. And I'm taking the map."

She walked along the pavement with him to his car. She surveyed it. Her face seemed to grow bright and hard.

"Is that your idea of a Milton Minor?"

He said, "I *do* possess a Milton Minor."

He opened the door and she got in. He was closing the door with its soft blue leather lining when Mr. Podmore arrived.

"Excuse me, sir, but this isn't O.K. with us."

"I beg your pardon."

"If it's a joke, Mr. Arthur——"

"No, it's a forty-five R.-R. I don't mind starting five minutes behind your Straight Eight."

Mr. Podmore glared at him.

"I must scratch you. This isn't straight sport."

Tancred got in on the off-side and closed the door.

"Oh, that's all right, sir. I'll just follow you for—fun."

Clovelly came to look at Tancred's car, and in admiring it, and in revising its somewhat casual estimate of the owner, it was compelled to admit that Mr. Podmore's car looked a garish product. But speed was to be the thing, speed and the expert handling of it. Tancred had seen defiance in Mr. Podmore's eyes.

"We have to beat that boulder, partner."

"Can you do it?"

"Wait and see. Put that map on your knees. We'll just hang on to his tail to begin with."

She was a little flushed and exultant.

"I'd simply love——"

"What naughty children we are! So would I."

Mr. Podmore, with an air of truculent breeziness, was getting the field under way. There was to be no hogging in

the town, but who would be permitted liking for such ex and entered the I cred's grey coupé. dear, but Frank wi and medium cars with a watch in hi

Tancred pressed

"I'm pretty sure by that fellow."

"He's fast?"

"And furious you mind speed?"

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And a furious Detroit through the large women! She was to be he he's going to try in the show was t

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A mile-long hills. The road cars, and here Tan Podmore's car sw

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He opened the ful that he swung Eight. Podmore opponent out, we yards or so Tan Yankee. Once o Mr. Podmore. I

Then Tancred glide inch by incl

the town, but when they reached the open country everyone would be permitted to tread on the juice. Mr. Podmore had a liking for such expressions. His two large women appeared, and entered the Detroit Eight with noses averted from Tancred's grey coupé. "He's just been saving up that swank, my dear, but Frank will show him something." The various small and medium cars spun out of the square, and Mr. Podmore, with a watch in his hand, came to take his seat in the Detroit.

Tancred pressed the self-starter button.

"I'm pretty sure that we shall have some trouble getting by that fellow."

"He's fast?"

"And furious! I bet you he will try to jockey us. Do you mind speed?"

"What do you think!"

And a furious affair it was. Tancred slid along behind the Detroit through the Helensea streets. He noticed that one of the large women kept looking out of the saloon's back window. She was to be her husband's prompter. "Look out, Frank, he's going to try and pass." Though Mrs. Podmore's share in the show was to be reserved for the open country.

The lesser people saw the Detroit roaring up the long and winding hill to the first chalk ridge, with the grey coupé sleeking along behind it like a fast cruiser cutting smooth water. Podmore was doing fifty-five, and on the curves such speed was sufficiently furious. Tancred held back. "We can't challenge him here." But he happened to know the road that lay ahead of them.

A mile-long straight vista ascended gently between the hills. The road was wide, and would accommodate four cars, and here Tancred swung out and accelerated, only to see Podmore's car swing out to baulk him.

"Damn the fellow!"

He opened the throttle, and his acceleration was so powerful that he swung farther out and drew level with the Detroit Eight. Podmore, realizing that he could not crowd his opponent out, went back to his near side, and for two hundred yards or so Tancred let his car run neck and neck with the Yankee. Once or twice he turned and smiled for a second at Mr. Podmore. Both cars were doing sixty-three.

Then Tancred accelerated ever so slightly, and began to glide inch by inch past the Detroit. Not till his car was clear

did he give her her head. She seemed to shoot like an arrow over the crown of the hill.

"How's that?"

She was laughing.

"You should have seen their faces!"

"I couldn't. Too occupied."

"But I did."

They arrived at Bigbury Rings some three minutes ahead of the Detroit Eight, nor did they wait in the car for all Clovelly to join them. Tancred had parked the coupé on the sweet downland turf. He apologized to the great green earth-work with its knoll of trees. "I know we should not come here like this. Please forgive us." They climbed the first turf rampart together, and, walking along it, saw the rolling country blue and strange, and empty of Straight Eights and all such mechanical matters.

She said: "You have asked this sweet place to forgive you. Now you had better ask me."

"Must I?"

"Well, haven't you been—masquerading? Now, who are you?"

For the moment he prevaricated.

"Can't one see the sea—over there?"

"Possibly. But I'm waiting."

He turned, looked at her and smiled.

"My dear, perhaps it is a day of great good fortune for me. Yes, my name is Tancred, James Arthur Tancred."

"And what, may I ask, are you doing—in that caravan-serai?"

"I came to collect—atmosphere."

"For a play?"

"Exactly. I like to get the real thing, and when you are watching Nature you may have to hide in a ditch."

"So—all the puppets performed for you quite nicely."

"Haven't I said that I am sorry? As a matter of fact I am not at all sorry. I'm producing the play myself. There will be a rather pleasant part in it—for a young woman—who will need an understudy. Care to consider it?"

"Bribery and corruption! Am I to be the understudy?"

He slipped a hand under her arm.

"You had better begin to haggle, about—a salary. The leading *jeune fille* in a Tancred play—"

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And then her young pride shed its fierceness.

"Do you really mean it? You don't even know whether
I have the stuff in me."

"I rather think you have."

"I'm not going to accept the part—until you have tried
me out in it."

"Very well. We are both—on approval. But wouldn't
it be a nice Christmas present for you to be able to tell those
two dear people of yours . . .? Let's go up and look at the
trees."

They walked in silence to the wooded crown of the great
hill. They held each other's hands.

"Do you expect—the usual—gratuity?"

"My dear, don't be flippant."

"It means—rather a lot to me."

"Well, and perhaps to me. I'm not the sort of coruscating
cad who—"

She turned to him quickly.

"No, I know that. I knew that at once. Woman does.
And what are we to say to Clovelly?"

"And to Mr. Podmore? I have it. We'll let it be known
that I'm a sort of super motor-tout, and that our sweet car is
just a demonstration car—out on loan."

"But that would mean he would recover from his squelch-
ing."

"Do you want him to remain squelched?"

And suddenly she laughed.

"All right, let's be kind—even to Mr. Podmore. Let's be
kind to everybody. I feel—"

She did not resent his arm.

"That's the spirit. Real Christmas, what? Let's go back
and tell your people."

1927

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Townville
Daily Bulletin

SHORT STORY of the Week

APPLE TREE FARM.

(By Warwick Deeping.)

(Copyright.)

MISS Martha Lord stood at her garden gate with a grey shawl over her shoulders.

She rested her hands on the gate. They were ugly hands, the thick red fingers bluntly pointed and predacious. She wore a silver ring on the finger that might have carried a wedding ring.

A cart was coming down the road, and Miss Lord looked over her shoulder. She saw the figure of a man moving above the line of the hedge. It was young David Marden of Apple Tree Farm, driving his dogcart down to Fernfield.

He pulled up outside Miss Lord's gate. "Anything I can do for you at Fernfield, Miss Martha?"

Her red hands had hidden themselves behind the gate.

"Gilsens have got a kettle of mine, Mr. Marden. They have had it a week."

"I'm calling there. I'll fetch it." She gave him a little, ungracious nod—and he drove on.

"Stiff old stick," he thought, "just like one of those yews in the burial ground."

Miss Lord was leaning over the gate and watching his dogcart trundling down the road. Her face expressed austere malevolence.

"You're too good for Lorna Pennell," she thought. Lorna indeed! Just like that fool Alice to call a girl Lorna. Lorna Marden.—Perhaps!

Lorna Pennell taught at the Forest Green school. When she sat at her desk, with the map of England on the wall behind her, she could look through the high window at the steep country climbing to the blue of the northern sky. She could see Apple Tree farm-house on its knoll, with the three wind-blown trees, and the patch going over the shoulder of the green hill. It seemed very near to her, so near that she could distinguish a white curtain flapping at a window. A solitary house. And she was going to live there, and she loved it.

The urchins below her would nudge each other.

"Teacher's looking for her sweetheart."

They bowed sedulous heads when her swift brown eyes descended upon them, for Miss Pennell had a bright colour and a quick temper.

That afternoon the nudging was urgent

gave a courier.

That afternoon the nudging was urgent and sly. The school clock had ticked away twenty minutes, and yet the brown eyes had not descended.

What was teacher looking at?

Apple Tree Farm.

But never had they seen her look in that way before. Usually her eyes would glimmer, but now they were black and set. She was frowning.

Someone giggled.

Miss Pennell swooped down from her contemplation of the high landscape. The end of a pencil rapped the desk.

"Stop that, Ivy Smith—stand up and read."

Miss Pennell was merciless for the rest of the afternoon, but she let them go five minutes before the hour. In fact it seemed to the children that she was in a hurry for them to be gone.

The road from Forest Green went past the white chapel and Miss Martha Lord's cottage, and the window of Miss Lord's parlour commanded a view of the road. She was knitting socks, and while her steel needles clicked she sent from her cold eyes frequent glances down the road.

Presently, Miss Lord got up, and opening the door, walked down the gravel path to the gate. She stood there knitting, with a stiff and expressionless face, waiting for the daughter of the woman who had stolen her lover away thirty-five years ago.

The sunlight played on Miss Lord's needles.

"Well, Lorna, my dear."

Lorna Pennell paused. Her brown eyes met Miss Martha's grey ones. My dear—indeed! But she smiled, because it was the Pennell tradition to smile at Miss Martha. And Miss Martha had understood that smile and had laid it aside like a knife with two edges.

"It must be the hottest day we have had this year."

"You look hot, anyway," said Miss Martha; "still you'll find it cool at the farm."

She smiled with thin lips, and her eyes kept glancing from her flickering needles to the flushed face of the girl.

"Jealous," she thought; "ha, ha."

Lorna, head in the air, was looking up towards the farm.

"David's at Fernfield—I think."

"He was. He passed back by here two hours ago."

She watched her needles.

"They had a kettle of mine to mend and he brought it back. I suppose you will be marrying soon, Lorna. It's wise to make sure of your man."

Lorna Pennell's eyes flashed round at

sure of your man."

Lorna Pennell's eyes flashed round at her, but Martha Lord's face looked flat and expressionless.

Apple Tree Farm was a grey house with

three wind-blown trees on the strip of rough grass in front of it. The bleakness of its garden sheltered itself behind a low stone wall and yet to Lorna Pennell the house on this windy upland was more pleasing than the school in the valley. She hurried, but to-day there was an element of anger in her haste.

She opened the white gate and walked up the path. And then she noticed something; one of the white curtains was twitched sharply across the living room window. She paused, and then walked quickly on, and tried the handle of the front door.

It was locked, and from within came a sound of furtive haste, whisperings.

She felt chilled; the colour had gone out of her face; deliberately she raised a hand to the black knocker, noticing as she did so that the wind and the rain and the sun had blistered and eaten away the brown paint on the door.

David had said that the door should be repainted before she came as his wife to Apple Tree Farm. The rat-tat of the knocker had echoed through the stone house. She fancied that she heard suppressed voices—rustling sound.

Nor had her senses failed her, though their impressions were deceiving. In the living room Marden and Jane Jenner—his old servant—were hastily smothering with paper something that stood on the oak table. Marden's eyes were laughing and sly.

"Quick, you had better get it into the kitchen, Jane. She mustn't see it."

"Oh, dear! But she's so fond of strolling into the kitchen."

"Well, take it upstairs. I'll go and open the door."

He waited until the stout figure of Jane Jenner, arms and bosom full of brown paper and twisted string, had disappeared up the stairs, and then he walked noisily across the stone paved hall and opened the door.

"Hallo! my dear, you!"

He was smiling, hiding a lover's secret, but his smile died slowly, for there was nothing to answer it in the eyes of the girl.

"Come in, Lorna! I'm just back from Fernfield."

She stood sideways, showing him her profile.

"No, I won't come in. I just came to leave word, David—that I can't go to the fête on Thursday."

He was puzzled.

"Why—what's the matter, dear?"

"Why—what's the matter, dear?"

"Nothing's the matter. But I can't go. I'm sorry. And now—I must be getting back. I've promised—"

He stepped out with an arm ready to encircle her, but she drew quickly back.

"No, I'm in a hurry. I'll see you on Sunday, I expect. Good-bye!"

Marden felt that it was wiser to let her go, for Lorna was like a wild bird, sensitive and very proud, and never had he felt quite sure of her. Perhaps that was why she drew him as no other woman had ever drawn him.

He watched her go down the hill. He was closing the brown door when Jane Jenner came down the stairs.

"I've hid it in the big cupboard, sir."

He answered her mechanically as he went towards the stairs.

"All right, Jane. As it happened she couldn't come in."

Upstairs he opened the big old cupboard in his bedroom, and lifting out the parcel, placed it on the floor. The wrappings fell away, displaying the polished woodwork of a handsome mahogany cabinet, a super-gramophone, lovingly ordered at the Fernfield music-shop, and carried home in David's cart. Thursday week was Lorna's birthday, and this was to be her birthday present, a secret smuggled in.

Other eyes had watched the coming and going of Lorna Pennell, for Miss Lord had a window at the back of her grey cottage which peered up over the tops of her apple trees at the house on the hill. She had been standing at this window. Her eyes were long-sighted.

"Jealous," she said to herself, "jealous. That's the poison for Alice Pennell's daughter."

When the girl passed down the road, Miss Martha Lord was at her garden gate, her steel pins clicking busily.

"David's busy—I guess," she said.

The girl went by with one quick glance at the tall old woman.

"So am I," she answered. "Children keep one busy."

Miss Lord was smiling, but her smile was inward and unpleasant.

She went into the cottage, walking slowly, and still smiling to herself. She ascended to her room, and laying her knitting on the bed opened a drawer in the oak chest, and lifted out a strange garment and a surprising hat. Strange gear in that grey cottage, and held by the red and ugly hands of that lonely woman. For the things which Miss Martha Lord had taken from the drawer were a cerise-coloured knitted coat and a little black cloche hat. She put them on, and looking at herself with grim irony in her mirror, nodded maliciously at her own reflection.

At Forrest Green, Lorna Pennell was opening the gate of the school-house. She stood there a moment, hesitating, her eyes looking darkly along the shadows of the

looking darkly along the shadows of the hedge.

Had it happened, or had her eyes deceived her? How often had she seen the figure of a woman stealing up that path to David Marden's house? And always, when she—Lorna—was safely held in this big bare room with her crowd of children. Why did the woman go there, and round to the back of the house? Who was she? Did she go there—at other times—after dark?

Yes, she was jealous. She knew that pride, a fierce and jealous pride was her peculiar sin, and yet she gave way to it that evening, recklessly and with a sense of rising anger.

She went out, locking the school-house door after her, and as she looked up at the farm on the hill she saw it was lit by the sunset—but in the valley it was growing dark.

Now, from Claypits a deep lane, wild and overhung by hazels, cut its way up through the hillside to Apple Tree Farm. A smother of woodland lay about the lane, and there were woodland rides and paths running secretly hither and thither. A thought had come to Lorna Pennell. She took one of the paths and coming to the sunk lane hid herself among the hazels about a furlong from David's farm.

Something passed below her in the dusk; she saw a vague shaft of colour, a redness.

She crouched, hating herself, yet holding to her hate. An hour passed, and again she heard a movement in the lane as of someone returning from the farm. A figure went by—swiftly.

Lorna Pennell stood up. Her pride had lost its fastidiousness; she was a wild creature hunting an enemy. She scrambled down into the lane and went swiftly in pursuit. The unknown woman eluded her—though once the girl thought that she saw a figure turn quickly into one of the paths. But Lorna Pennell never caught the shadow of the thing that had drifted across her happiness.

She stood under an old holly, loathing herself and life.

"I'll challenge it," she thought. "That's honest. Better than sneaking here—"

She went quickly up the lane to Apple Tree Farm, and going in by the yard gate, made her way through the garden to the front of the house. There was a light in one of the lower windows, and the blind was down—but the thing that astonished her was a sound that came from the room, a sound of music, of a gay and reckless fox-trot.

"Is that—his mood?" she thought. "When did he buy that thing? Dance music!"

She felt chilled and scornful. She went straight to the brown door and knocked. The music ceased abruptly.

She saw him standing in the doorway.

The music ceased abruptly.

She saw him standing in the doorway.

"Lorna—!"

Her face was dim and bleak.

"I want to ask you a question, David."

"My dear, come in—"

"No. I must ask you a question. I—must. Who is it that comes up here—?"

"Who comes up here—?"

"Yes."

"But—my dear! What do you mean?"

"A woman—"

"A woman!"

"Yes. She passed me in the lane. Besides—I have seen— O—how horrible and mean this is! David—tell me—"

He stood very still—utterly astonished.

"But no one has been here. No one—comes—"

"Then, am I blind?"

"But, Lorna, I tell you— Listen."

But suddenly she put up her hands, and recoiled from him.

"Oh, don't lie, don't lie. I can't bear it. I won't bear it. If you had told me. But you must know. It's the deceit of it. Why should you try and conceal?"

He made a quick movement towards her.

"Lorna, I don't know what you are talking about. It's too absurd. My dear—"

She went back swiftly from him.

"No, don't try to touch me. You must know. I'm going. Don't dare follow."

She fled down the path to the gate, while he ran, calling to her.

"Lorna, come back."

She was weeping, but she did not falter. She was furious with her own tears. She ran like a wild thing, down the hill, and into the darkness of the valley.

Neither of them slept much that night, and before sunrise Marden was under his lover's window.

"Lorna," he called. "Lorna."

No one answered him, for there was no one there to answer. Her room was empty, and she, driven by the same wild unrest, had gone wandering up over the ridge and into the woods. She had had moments of doubt and of remorse. Had her jealousy made her too hasty?

Her mood sought the sunken lane, and in the grey of the dawn she idled along it, heavy-eyed and doubting. She came to the place where she had crouched hidden among the hazels. Something was hanging on a trailing briar, a little pink handkerchief, dropped in haste and caught by a thorn. She lifted it from the briar, and spreading it, looked for a name or for the initials of a name. There was nothing.

About ten o'clock that morning one of Miss Pennell's school-children carried a letter up to Apple Tree Farm. Marden was leaning over the gate, an empty pipe between his teeth. The child gave him the letter.

"Teacher sent this."

the letter.

"Teacher sent this."

Folded inside the letter was the little pink handkerchief.

"David,

"Someone dropped this in your lane last night. Perhaps you will return it to her. Please do not try to see me."

"Lorna Pennell."

The Forest Green school closed that same day for the summer holidays, and when Marden, after hours of indecision, went down to protest against this mystery, he found the school-house locked. Lorna had gone. Someone told him that they had seen the "White Horse" fly driving her to Fernfield station.

Concerning this lover's quarrel much was said as the weeks went by, and old Jane Jenner, full of indignant gossip, poured it into the ears of the nearest listener and the listener was Miss Lord.

"Poor Master David, he's taken it hard. Why, he was never a man to look at another woman. And there wasn't another woman; I'll swear it."

"You should know, Jane," said Miss Lord, with her eyes on her knitting needles, "anyway, it was a funny business. You never saw anybody, I suppose?"

"Never, not in my life, ever."

But Marden had not forgotten. It had taken him two months to find out where Lorna had hidden herself; she had taken a post as second teacher in a school in a south Devon village. He wrote to her, and she did not answer his letters, but Marden was not a man to be put off with silence.

Late in the autumn he disappeared for a day or two. He hunted Lorna out in the cottage where she lodged. She spoke to him in the doorway, but she would not let him in.

"All that is finished for me, David. I don't think I'm a marrying woman."

She could meet him calmly now, but her calmness seemed to him more fatal than her anger.

"Why don't you believe me, Lorna?"

"I would—if you would tell me."

"But—how—can I tell you when I don't know."

She gave a shrug of the shoulders.

"I had to believe my own eyes. There was a someone."

He could not help being impressed by her obstinate auroress. What if there had been—?

"Look here," he said, "there is some sort of mystery here. I've always refused to believe; but let's be assured there was somebody—"

She looked at him queerly.

"No, I'm not hedging," he said. "I can only think that you and I have been put at cross-purposes. What was she like?"

"I never saw her face. She passed close to me in the lane."

"She did! But what—?"

"I used to see her going up the hill."

"It's extraordinary—damnable. And what did she wear?"

"A pinkish loose coat and a black hat."

Marden stood and stared.

"And yet I never saw her, nor did Jane. A ghost."

"Do ghosts leave handkerchiefs behind?"

He could not move her. She told him calmly and with determination that she had decided not to marry.

"I don't think—with my temperament—it would be a happy marriage—"

"It would have been," he said, "if you had trusted me."

In the spring Marden went again to the Devon village. Lorna was there still, the same obstinate Lorna with the aloof eyes.

"If you would set me some sort of a task," he argued, "just to prove—"

"There can be only one thing."

"What is it?"

"Prove to me who the woman was."

During the next winter January was very bleak, with snow lying, and a bitter wind blowing through the boughs of the three apple trees on the hill. And in the grey of a winter morning old Jenner went down the hill with a jug of milk and a dozen eggs for Miss Martha Lord at the cottage. The cottage door was locked, and Jane could make no one hear.

An hour later the Claypits policeman forced the front window, and opened the front door.

"You go up," he said to Jane.

Jane ascended the narrow stairs to find Miss Martha Lord lying dead in her bed.

The live woman stared.

"Mercy! Well! I'm—!"

When she had given the news to the policeman Jane hurried back to the farm. She found Marden breaking the ice in the pond below the wagon shed.

"Miss Martha's dead! Died in her sleep. She gave me a fright! What d'you think—?"

Marden's blue eyes were the colour of the winter sky.

"She frightened you, Jane?"

"Well, if you'd seen her lying dead in a bright pink woolly coat, and a black hat on one knob of the bed—"

And then her old eyes stared in astonishment at her master's grim face.

"Why—?"

"A pink coat? My God!—why don't you see—?"

(The End.)

Miss Jeudwine and Miss Jacks

A "dual personality"
story which touches
the level of divine
laughter and tears.

By WARWICK DEEPING

MISS JEUDWINE'S house stood on Mary's Hill. From the olive-green gates a gravel drive unwound itself between two extensive lawns and, branching left and right in front of the house, enclosed a large round flower-bed, red with tulips in the spring, and with geraniums in the summer. The house was white—a low, spreading house, with a broad, green-topped veranda and green shutters. The brass knocker and the old-fashioned brass bell-handle shone like the gold plate in a goldsmith's window. Plantations of ornamental trees surrounded the garden.

Miss Jeudwine was a "character." Sir John Jeudwine, her father, of Indian Mutiny fame, had built the house some fifty years ago, and his daughter had continued to live in it, and her two servants and her gardener had been with her more than twenty years. Wallingdon had decided long ago that Miss Jeudwine was no use to the town. She was mean—inexpressibly mean. In fact, she was a miser.

Various and successive vicars had attempted to interest Miss Jeudwine in parochial affairs and had failed. She gave her three guineas a year, and that was the

end of it. She supported the cottage hospital, but the many local coteries who contrived to amuse themselves on other people's money had found her adamant. On various occasions the representatives of the cricket club, the football club, the working-men's institute, the choral society, the Boy Scouts and the Girl Guides had written her polite and flattering letters and had received no plunder. Ingratiating and charitable blackmailers had called on her, but Miss Jeudwine had refused to be blackmailed. Other gentlemen of toil who levy tribute cursed her wholeheartedly, the dustmen, the postmen, the tradesmen's boys, the coal porters, and all beggars. Her dustbin was emptied under protest. Grown men left her gate open; boys scribbled rude words on it—"Miss Skin-flint"; "Old Misery." On several occasions she had been presented with dead cats, and on the night of one Fifth of November a female guy had been left squatting in the middle of her drive, a rude and suggestive figure in rusty black, with a disreputable hat at a disreputable angle.

A piece of cardboard had borne the inscription: "You and me!" Miss Jeudwine had gone out and inspected the guy,

Miss Jeudwine and Miss Jacks

removed the piece of cardboard, and ordered Toms the gardener to burn the figure.

But that piece of cardboard hung at the foot of Miss Jeudwine's bed. "You and me!" She had nicknamed the dead guy "Miss Jacks."

ABOUT this time a new vicar came to Wallingdon, an energetic man who wore his responsibility as he wore his surplice, with a good deal of solemnity. He was sincere, a little fanatical, and quite guiltless of any sense of humour, which was a pity, for it implied that he would never wear an apron. He had the English beef of influence, but the mustard was lacking.

Mr. Clarbury called on Miss Jeudwine. He discovered her to be a little woman, with a gently determined face, shrewd eyes, and grey hair parted in the middle. She wore black, and it suited her white skin. Mr. Clarbury found her unexpected, and the unexpected in life worried him.

"I want everybody to help me in Wallingdon," he said; "and I am sure that you will sympathize."

Miss Jeudwine looked at his neat, well-preserved face, and asked him a question.

"Does Wallingdon need helping?"

Being the man he was he quite missed her point and assumed that she was asking for information.

"We think of having a new organ."

"Yes."

"And the churchyard and the cemetery have not been kept quite as I should like them."

"I see."

"I want to increase our missionary efforts."

"Abroad?"

"Yes, abroad. And it seems to me, Miss Jeudwine, that we could do much more in the winter—lectures, church teas, enlarge the coal and Christmas funds, persuade the people——"

Miss Jeudwine made a little movement of the hand.

"I think you misunderstood my question."

Mr. Clarbury was the kind of man who resented the suggestion that anything could be misunderstood by him.

"I beg your pardon, but how——"

"I asked you if you thought that Wallingdon needed helping?"

He stared at her.

"My dear Miss Jeudwine, don't you?"

"No," she said quietly, "I don't."

He was posed. He could only remind himself of her reputation for misanthropy, but he was ready to argue the point.

"I should like to be able to convince you."

"Mr. Clarbury," she said, "I suppose you have come to me for money?"

He looked along his nose at her.

"Well, in a sense——"

"I quite understand you. For years Wallingdon has come to me for money. It comes to you for money. It is a sponge."

"My dear lady!" he said.

She smiled faintly at his air of horror.

"Mr. Clarbury, do you know of anybody who is starving in Wallingdon?"

"No," he said, "not exactly starving."

"Or without boots?"

"No."

"Because my point is that there is no suffering in Wallingdon—no real suffering, I mean. It might be better for Wallingdon if there were. You know the old saying: 'First fill a man's stomach, and then you may be able to fill his soul.'"

Mr. Clarbury had never heard of it, but he did not say so.

"You imply?" he said, a little aggressively.

"Wallingdon is a stomach. It digests all that you put into it, and is always ready for more. Now, if you had come to me and asked me to help you to starve Wallingdon's stomach and fill its——"

She paused provocatively, as though mischievously wondering whether he could supply the word. He did supply it, but it was the wrong word.

"Head," he suggested.

She looked at him with veiled pity and a glimmer of impatience.

"Oh, if you like, but I am no more interested in Wallingdon's head than in the other part of its anatomy. It is fatty; it has the characteristics of fatness; it thinks of nothing but fatness."

Mr. Clarbury had never in his life met such a woman. The pride of her, the self-complacency, her uncomfortable unexpectedness.

"Then, am I to understand," he asked, "that you refuse?"

"Not a penny," she said, smiling, "not one penny."

Mr. Clarbury never lost his temper—at

least, he said that he never lost it—but he and Miss Jeudwine had a final argument in which Mr. Clarbury's voice seemed to get deeper and deeper into his throat. He had a way of sniffing and of jerking his head when he was excited or annoyed.

"Before I go, Miss Jeudwine, I do feel it is my duty to remind you—my spiritual duty—that we do not live by bread alone."

"Exactly," she said. "And there is another quotation you might use, something about a camel and the eye of a needle."

"I—do—use it," he said, standing up and jerking his head. "It is easier—"

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"Please, Mr. Clarbury, how do you know that I am rich?"

He stared at her; he glanced about the room as though calling on the furniture and the pictures to do their duty and support him.

"Well, may I say—that I was told——"

"You were told that I was a rich old wretch who never gave away a farthing! Quite so. But does it follow——"

He turned on her, wagging a finger.

"Miss Jeudwine, are you rich? I feel that I have a right——"

"Mr. Clarbury," she said, "Wallingdon has always assumed that I am rich, and that it has a right to dictate to me how I ought to spend my money. It is nothing to do with Wallingdon. Please, when you open the door, do be careful of my dog; he has a trick of lying just outside on the door-mat."

Mr. Clarbury bowed to her.

"I will not tread on your dog," he said, "and I wish you good afternoon. May I say that this interview has been humiliating—quite humiliating."

"I am really very sorry," she said.

SO Wallingdon ceased to be actively interested in Miss Jeudwine, though it cursed her occasionally, left her gate open, and stole her fruit. She lived a life apart. It was known that she went up to London regularly three days a week, and that she travelled by the workman's train, and this was remembered against her as a supreme act of meanness. There were a few people who wondered what she did in London. She was known to be passionately fond of music.

Someone suggested that she spent half her life tramping London looking for

bargains, and saving halfpennies, and the explanation held. It became an accepted fact in Wallingdon, like the other accepted facts about Miss Jeudwine, that she starved her servants, that Toms, her gardener, had to take part of his wages in vegetables, that she bought her clothes second-hand, that even her dog was rationed as to biscuits. She was a guy on whom it was possible to fasten any sort of tag.

Yet one or two observant people had realized that Miss Jeudwine looked happy, that the eyes of her determined gentleness were kind.

"She ought to be pretty miserable," said Wallingdon.

But she wasn't.

Working men, porters, and women who had to make their money look like silk when it was only cotton, saw Miss Jeudwine on Wallingdon platform. They saw her again at Waterloo. Then she disappeared, and not one of these hungry humans ever troubled to wonder what became of her.

As a matter of fact, she walked to a little shabby hotel in a shabby street, entered it, gave her usual nod to the proprietress, and went upstairs to a room on the top floor. She remained there twenty minutes. When she reappeared she was no longer the Miss Jeudwine of Mary's Hill. She was shabbier; she looked poor yet workman-like. She suggested an elderly nurse, or a woman who has to make her living by shouldering other people's superfluous worries. She might have been a seamstress, anything.

She walked two miles.

At nine o'clock Miss Martinsyde, who was in charge of the "Jeudwine Crèche," had a cup of chocolate ready for Miss Jacks. She was never late. She came in, drank her chocolate in Miss Martinsyde's room, talked a little, and then got to work. These two women were very attached to each other. For two hours Miss Jacks would wash and mend and chatter, and become a child among little children. She had a way with them. She could soothe a fretful bundle of disharmonies when Miss Martinsyde and the others failed. Everyone knew her as Miss Jacks. Rumour had it that she had once been Miss Jeudwine's cook, a superior woman, but still a cook.

At eleven o'clock she went on to the "Jeudwine Hostel." There were always some girls and women here, and Miss

Miss Jeudwine and Miss Jacks

Jacks behaved as one of them. She was accepted and accepted with slang and with affection. They called her "Old Jack."

"Lord love a duck, ol' dear, you want a new jackit!"

"I have got a new coat somewhere," said Miss Jacks.

"Up the spout, what! I 'ad ter pawn my best 'at after I'd bin to Sarthend."

It was a merry place this hostel where girls—some of them derelict—found good and some sort of temporary home.

"I say, it's sossidges and mash to-day!"

"I'm there!"

Miss Jacks also had sausages and mashed potatoes with the others. They used to tease her a little, but lovingly, and without any assaults upon her dignity, for "Old Jack" had dignity. "Not side, mind yer!" These noisy lassies would not stand side.

Most days Miss Jacks had a kind of confessional, for she had a reputation for wisdom, the wisdom of sympathy.

"Go and arst ol' Jack."

They came and told her their troubles.

"What worries me is the kid. What ham I to do with the poor little blighter?"

"Won't the father help?"

"'Elp? I don't know where the blighter is. Wish I did. He cut and left me to it. Borrowed a quid off me to buy the weddin' ring."

Miss Jacks would say that she would ask her Miss Jeudwine if she could help.

"Why don't your Miss Jeudwine show up 'ere?"

"She's a very great invalid. She doesn't go out."

Miss Jacks gave her afternoons to other activities. She visited friends. She had a great number of friends who were glad to see her because she was Miss Jacks, and not for what could be got out of her. She gave herself, not cash, though sometimes a little money was procured from the rich and mysterious person in the country. She was the friend of wives who had drunken husbands, and the helper of husbands who had drunken wives. She saw black eyes and the emptiness of cupboards. She met people who were coarsely great, and vulgarly splendid. Suffering drew her; she had a genius for discovering it and for soothing some of the smart of it.

There had been occasions when she had done extraordinarily brave things, faced bestial rages and threats of violence.

A drunken, roaring stevedore had threatened to throw her downstairs.

"All right. But just let me borrow a mattress."

"What the blazes do you want a mattress for?"

"To make things a bit softer at the bottom."

She was not thrown downstairs.

What people liked about her was that she listened and did not talk "pi." You never had the feeling that Miss Jacks was improving you, but she did it all the same.

WALLINGDON might never have troubled itself farther about Miss Jeudwine and her misanthropy had not her unpopularity been revived by her behaviour in the matter of the Wallingdon Sports Club. The club needed a new ground and the most likely field lay at the bottom of Mary's Hill and belonged to Miss Jeudwine. The committee, which consisted of small tradesmen and working men, considered that it would be a graceful act on Miss Jeudwine's part if she presented the field to the town. In these days of universal education, serialized wisdom and democratic cocksureness, who was Miss Jeudwine anyway?

The committee was sceptical, but it approached Miss Jeudwine in the persons of a grocer and a postman.

She refused to make the town a present of the field. If Wallingdon wanted it, Wallingdon could pay the market price for it, and that was the end of the matter so far as the field was concerned, but it was not the end of Miss Jeudwine's unpopularity. She had said one or two rather severe things to the deputation. "Some of you seem to expect to have your amusements paid for by other people. Wallingdon can afford to buy its own footballs. I have heard of places where leather is scarce for boots." Miss Jeudwine had offended the sportsmen of Wallingdon—the crowd of males who collected on Saturday afternoons to watch twenty-two lads play a game.

Someone remarked that they would get even with the old woman. It was a mere foolish boast, but causality is a complex of coincidence, and it happened that the militant person was an engineer, that he was out of work, that he sighted Miss Jeudwine getting into the workman's train, and the "red" in him took fire. He was

travelling citywards in quest of a job, but he abandoned the quest to follow an old lady, just to see what "the old brute did with herself and her money."

Pitter was the man's name, and he enjoyed a day of surprises. Circumstances were kind to him, and he happened upon one of those adventures for which Miss Jacks was famous, but his malice read into the adventure something very different from the truth. He followed her to the hotel, saw her re-appear in her shabby clothes, and immediately scented sin.

"Lord, if I'm not going to catch her out at something! Who'd have thought it!"

He shadowed her to the crèche and the hostel, and spent a loafing and puzzled morning. He began to be vaguely disappointed, but his triumph came in the afternoon. Miss Jeudwine led him to a depressing house in a depressing street; she entered the house, but presently she reappeared. Mr. Pitter followed her into a more bustling thoroughfare, and saw her enter a public-house.

"I've got her!" he thought.

But her reappearance staggered even Mr. Pitter's exultation, for she emerged holding a sheepish-looking man by the arm. The sheepish person was in a certain condition, and his unsteadiness conveyed their vibrations to Miss Jacks. She smuggled him down a side street, her little black figure compelled to accept some of the idiosyncrasies of his method of progression, but she got him safely back to the house, and the door closed on them.

Metaphorically Mr. Pitter slapped his thigh.

"I've got her," he reflected. "She has an old booze of a husband or something stowed away up here. It's more than likely she helps him to put it away. My hat, the respectable Miss Jeudwine of Mary's Hill!"

He made his way home. In the train it occurred to him that Miss Jeudwine might be willing to part with money in order to cover up such a scandal, but upon further meditation he realized that this would be blackmail. Mr. Pitter had a voice, but he was not particularly brave. He decided that it would not be wise to play "your money or your honour" game with Miss Jeudwine. It would be much safer to give gossip a kick and set it rolling.

And that is what he did.

It spread. The scandal walked out of

the Radical Club in many pairs of boots and reproduced itself in various corners of Wallingdon. It reached the tradesmen and the tradesmen's boys, penetrated to the domestic servants, and through them reached a higher stratum. Miss Jeudwine's misanthropy was accounted for. She was a Mrs. and not a Miss, and if she was not a Mrs. then she ought to be one. She had a disreputable husband hidden away in a London slum, and she went there to carouse with him.

ONE morning Miss Jeudwine caught Toms, her gardener, outside the gate with a sponge and a bucket of water.

"What is it, Toms?"

"I was going to wash down the gate, miss. These 'ere mischievous kids—"

He looked uncomfortable, and Miss Jeudwine glanced at the green gate. Some inscription in white chalk was printed boldly across it, and she read the inscription:

Hallo, old J. I! What price the old man in town? Had a glass of gin with him lately?

Miss Jeudwine betrayed no emotion.

"I wonder what that means, Toms?"

"I wonder, miss."

"You had better wash it off."

Toms washed it off, and being a loyal man without a grievance he got up half-an-hour earlier each morning and washed other inscriptions off the gate. He was angry. He kept watch for one or two nights, but he never caught anyone, yet the offender succeeded in cheating Toms. He managed to chalk the gate after one of Toms' early morning visits, and when Miss Jeudwine came out on her way to become Miss Jacks she read the following announcement:

Jeudwine lives a double life.

She stood a moment, staring at the chalked letters. So her secret was out, and some generous friend was attaching a sinister meaning to it! She smiled a smile of gentle scorn and defiance, and went on her way Londonwards.

Toms, however, was a man of some character, and he went and interviewed the inspector of police.

"It's a dog's trick and a dirty one," he declared; "because she ain't easy with her money the whole town has a grudge against her. I've bin at Mary's Hill more than

Miss Jeudwine and Miss Jacks

twenty years, and she's treated me fair and generous."

The inspector took action, with the result that a certain James Pitter was caught after dark chalking an offensive challenge on Miss Jeudwine's gate. The inspector went up to the house and asked to see Miss Jeudwine. She saw him.

"We have caught the person who has been defacing your gate, miss. Do you wish to prosecute?"

Miss Jeudwine said that she did not wish to prosecute, and the inspector, whose work in life had not taught him to be a complete idealist, wondered whether her disinclination to prosecute was inspired by fear.

She asked the name of her enemy.

"A man named Pitter."

Miss Jeudwine had never heard of him.

"I can't understand it," she said. "Did he give you any reason, inspector?"

The inspector looked embarrassed.

"He talked a lot of wild stuff, Miss Jeudwine."

"Please tell me."

"It's not very——"

"I want you to tell me. It interests me more than you suspect."

The inspector told her what the man Pitter had told him, and his great solemn, red face changed its gravity for a look of astonishment, for Miss Jeudwine was laughing, and she laughed till the tears came.

"You really must excuse me, inspector. But if you knew the real facts——"

She looked at the big man.

"Well, I will tell you—if you will promise to keep my secret. Nobody else in Wallingdon has any idea——"

"I'll try to, miss."

She told him the whole tale, and when she had completed it she found him looking at her with blue-eyed homage.

"You ought to prosecute, miss," he said.

"Why?"

"It's a duty to yourself, a duty to all of us, your duty to this blackguard. People ought to know."

She smiled her gently determined smile.

"Inspector, do you think I am a happy woman?"

"I should say so, miss."

"Well, what is all this nonsense to me? It can't touch my happiness. I have never studied Wallingdon, and I cannot complain if Wallingdon does not love me. Let the man go."

"But—my dear lady——"

"Inspector, I bear no grudge. For the first time since I have lived here Wallingdon has given me a good laugh."

They left it at that, though the inspector had no illusions as to what the result would be, and though he warned Mr. Pitter that Miss Jeudwine had treated him generously, and that a decent man would keep his mouth shut.

Mr. Pitter was not a decent man.

"She daren't touch me, that's it. She's an old humbug, and she knows it."

"You are too cheap for her to trouble about, my lad."

"Oh, am I! I'm not a dirty parasite, anyway, and I'm not paid to protect parasites."

"I know your sort," said the big man, "you are the new kind of bastard Englishman, a cross between a monkey and a Mr. Marx."

SO it continued to be assumed in Wallingdon that Miss Jeudwine was not only a miserly person but a hypocrite, and that she had some disreputable secret the nature of which any world-wise person could infer. The superstition lingered till one wet November night when Miss Jacks on returning from some merciful adventure was run over by a motor-bus in Newington Causeway. She was fatally injured, but she was conscious. She asked to be taken to the Jeudwine Hostel.

And there she died, but not friendless or in solitude. Women and girls crept up the stairs, and stood for a moment in the little room. Many of them kissed her; many had wet eyes.

"Dear old Jack, the best sport as ever was."

Two days later her secret was discovered.

Wallingdon had very little to say, for Wallingdon had a feeling that Miss Jeudwine must have enjoyed some divine laughter. It gave her no epitaph; it was a little ashamed of what had been scrawled on her green gate.

But someone supplied an epitaph. A big man with a fiery, round face, sneaking up to Mary's Hill in the darkness, produced an electric torch and a piece of chalk, and then fled like a shy boy.

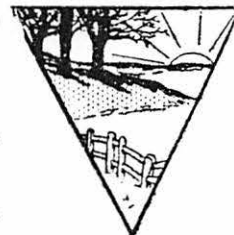
She was a great little woman.

Toms read that on the gate in the morning. He said Amen to it. And those chalked letters remained on the gate until the new owner had it repainted.



MISS JEUDWINE AND MISS JACKS

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6

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"I will not tread on your dog," he said, "and I wish you good afternoon. May I say that this interview has been humiliating—quite humiliating."

"I am really very sorry," she said.

So Wallingdon ceased to be actively interested in Miss Jeudwine, though it cursed her occasionally, left her gate open, and stole her fruit. She lived a life apart. It was known that she went up to London regularly three days a week, and that she travelled by the workman's train, and this was remembered against her as a supreme act of meanness. There were a few people who wondered what she did in London. She was known to be passionately fond of music.

Someone suggested that she spent half her life tramping about London looking for bargains, and saving halfpennies, and the explanation held. It became an accepted fact in Wallingdon, like the other accepted facts about Miss Jeudwine, that she starved her servants, that Toms, her gardener, had to take part of his wages in vegetables, that she bought her clothes second-hand, that even her dog was rationed as to biscuits. She was a guy on whom it was possible to fasten any sort of tag.

Yet one or two observant people had realized that Miss Jeudwine looked happy, that the eyes of her determined gentleness were kind. She had the air of feeding on some secret and spiritual food.

"She ought to be pretty miserable," said Wallingdon.

But she wasn't.

Working men, porters, and women who had to make their money look like silk when it was only cotton, saw Miss Jeudwine on Wallingdon platform. They saw her again at Waterloo. Then she disappeared, and not one of these hungry humans ever troubled to wonder what became of her.

As a matter of fact, she walked to a little shabby hotel in a shabby street, entered it, gave her usual nod to the proprietress, and went upstairs to a room on the top floor. She remained there twenty minutes. When she reappeared she was no longer the Miss Jeudwine of Mary's Hill. She was shabbier; she looked poor yet workmanlike. She suggested an elderly nurse, or a woman who has to make her living by shouldering other people's superfluous worries. She might



"Miss Jeudwine, are you rich?"

have been a seamstress, anything. She always carried a little old black hand-bag.

She walked two miles.

At nine o'clock Miss Martinsyde, who was in charge of the "Jeudwine Crèche," had a cup of chocolate ready for Miss Jacks. She was never late. She came in, drank her chocolate in Miss Martinsyde's room, talked a little, and then got to work. These two women were very attached to each other. For two hours Miss Jacks would wash and mend and chatter, and become a child among little children. She had a way with them. She could soothe a fretful bundle of disharmonies when Miss Martinsyde and the others failed. Everyone knew her as Miss Jacks. Rumour had it that she had once been Miss Jeudwine's cook, a superior woman, but still a cook.

At eleven o'clock she went on to the "Jeudwine Hostel." There were always some girls and women here, and Miss Jacks behaved as one of them. She was accepted and accepted with slang and with affection. They called her "Old Jack."

"Lord love a duck, ol' dear, you want a new jackit!"

"I have got a new coat somewhere," said Miss Jacks.

"Up the spout, what! I 'ad ter pawn my best 'at after I'd bin to Sarthend."

It was a merry place this hostel where girls—some of them derelict—found good and some sort of temporary home.

"I say, it's sossidges and mash to-day!"

"I'm there!"

Miss Jacks also had sausages and mashed potatoes with the others. They used to tease her a little, but lovingly, and without any assaults upon her dignity, for "Old Jack" had dignity. "Not side, mind yer!" These noisy lasses would not stand side. There had been an occasion when they had pushed a somewhat distinguished lady visitor into the coal-hole, thrown a door mat over her and locked her in.

Most days Miss Jacks had a kind of confessional, for she had a reputation for wisdom, the wisdom of sympathy.

"Go and arst ol' Jack."

They came and told her their troubles.

"What worries me is the kid. What ham I to do with the poor little blighter?"

"Won't the father help?"

"Elp? I don't know where the blighter is. Wish I did. He cut and left me to it. Borrowed a quid off me to buy the weddin' ring."

Miss Jacks would say that she would ask her Miss Jeudwine if she could help.

"Why don't your Miss Jeudwine show up 'ere?"

"She's a very great invalid. She doesn't go out."

Miss Jacks gave her afternoons to other activities. She visited friends. She had a great number of friends who were glad to see her because she was Miss Jacks, and not for what could be got out of her. She gave herself, not cash, though sometimes a little money was procured from the rich and mysterious person in the country. She was the friend of wives who had drunken husbands, and the helper of husbands who had drunken wives. She saw black eyes and the emptiness of cupboards. She met people who were coarsely great, and vulgarly splendid. Suffering drew her; she had a genius for discovering it and for soothing some of the smart of it. She drank too much strong tea and was pawed by dirty children, but all suffering was clean to her—and sacred.

There had been occasions when she had done extraordinarily brave things, faced bestial rages and threats of violence.

A drunken, roaring stevedore had threatened to throw her downstairs.

"All right. But just let me borrow a mattress."

"What the blazes do you want a mattress for?"

"To make things a bit softer at the bottom."

She was not thrown downstairs.

What people liked about her was that she listened and did not talk "pi." You never had the feeling that Miss Jacks was improving you, but she did it all the same.

Wallingdon might never had troubled itself farther about Miss Jeudwine and her misanthropy had not her unpopularity been revived by her behaviour in the matter of the Wallingdon Sports Club. The club needed a new ground, and the most likely field lay at the bottom of Mary's Hill and belonged to Miss Jeudwine. The committee, which consisted of small tradesmen and working men, considered that it would be a graceful act on Miss Jeudwine's part if

she presented the field to the town. In these days of universal education, serialized wisdom and democratic cocksureness, who was Miss Jeudwine anyway? A militant member of the committee had something to say about plutocrats and parasites.

The committee was sceptical, but it approached Miss Jeudwine in the persons of a grocer and a postman.

She refused to make the town a present of the field. If Wallingdon wanted it, Wallingdon could pay the market price for it, and that was the end of the matter so far as the field was concerned, but it was not the end of Miss Jeudwine's unpopularity. She had said one or two rather severe things to the deputation. "Some of you seem to expect to have your amusements paid for by other people. Wallingdon can afford to buy its own footballs. I have heard of places where leather is scarce for boots." Miss Jeudwine had offended the sportsmen of Wallingdon—the crowd of males who collected on Saturday afternoons to watch twenty-two lads play a game.

Someone remarked that they would get even with the old woman. It was a mere foolish boast, but causality is a complex of coincidence, and it happened that the militant person was an engineer, that he was out of work, that he sighted Miss Jeudwine getting into the workman's train, and the "red" in him took fire. He was travelling citywards in quest of a job, but he abandoned the quest to follow an old lady, just to see what "the old brute did with herself and her money."

Pitter was the man's name, and he enjoyed a day of surprises. Circumstances were kind to him, and he happened upon one of those adventures for which Miss Jacks was famous, but his malice read into the adventure something very different from the truth. He followed her to the hotel, saw her reappear in her shabby clothes, and immediately scented sin.

"Lord, if I'm not going to catch her out at something! Who'd have thought it!"

He shadowed her to the crèche and the hostel, and spent a loafing and puzzled morning. He began to be vaguely disappointed, but his triumph came in the afternoon. Miss Jeudwine led him to a depressing house in a depressing

street; she entered the house, but presently she reappeared. Mr. Pitter followed her into a more bustling thoroughfare, and saw her enter a public-house.

"I've got her!" he thought.

But her reappearance staggered even Mr. Pitter's exultation, for she emerged holding a sheepish-looking man by the arm. The sheepish person was in a certain condition, and his unsteadiness conveyed their vibrations to Miss Jacks. She smuggled him down a side street, her little black figure compelled to accept some of the idiosyncrasies of his method of progression, but she got him safely back to the house, and the door closed on them.

Metaphorically Mr. Pitter slapped his thigh.

"I've got her," he reflected. "She has an old booze of a husband or something stowed away up here. It's more than likely she helps him to put it away. My hat, the respectable Miss Jeudwine of Mary's Hill. I suppose a chap can tell a friend what he has seen?"

He made his way home. In the train it occurred to him that Miss Jeudwine might be willing to part with money in order to cover up such a scandal, but upon further meditation he realized that this would be blackmail. Mr. Pitter had a voice, but he was not particularly brave. He decided that it would not be wise to play "your money or your honour" game with Miss Jeudwine. It would be much safer to give gossip a kick and set it rolling.

And that is what he did.

It spread. The scandal walked out of the Radical Club in many pairs of boots and reproduced itself in various corners of Wallingdon. It reached the tradesmen and the tradesmen's boys, penetrated to the domestic servants, and through them reached a higher stratum. Miss Jeudwine's misanthropy was accounted for. She was a Mrs. and not a Miss, and if she was not a Mrs. then she ought to be one. She had a disreputable husband hidden away in a London slum, and she went there to carouse with him. The unlovely part of Wallingdon believed that it had discovered Miss Jeudwine's secret sin.

One morning Miss Jeudwine caught Toms, her gardener, outside the gate with a sponge and a bucket of water.

"What is it, Toms?"

"I was going to wash down the gate, miss. These 'ere mischievous kids——"

He looked uncomfortable, and Miss Jeudwine glanced at the green gate. Some inscription in white chalk was printed boldly across it, and she read the inscription:

"Hallo, old J.! What price the old man in town? Had a glass of gin with him lately?"

Miss Jeudwine betrayed no emotion.

"I wonder what that means, Toms?"

"I wonder, miss."

"You had better wash it off."

Toms washed it off, and being a loyal man without a grievance he got up half an hour earlier each morning and washed other inscriptions off the gate. He was angry. He kept watch for one or two nights, but he never caught anyone, yet the offender succeeded in cheating Toms. He managed to chalk the gate after one of Toms' early morning visits, and when Miss Jeudwine came out on her way to become Miss Jacks she read the following announcement:

"Jeudwine lives a double life."

She stood a moment, staring at the chalked letters. So her secret was out, and some generous friend was attaching a sinister meaning to it! She smiled a smile of gentle scorn and defiance, and went on her way Londonwards.

Toms, however, was a man of some character, and he went and interviewed the inspector of police.

"It's a dog's trick and a dirty one," he declared; "because she ain't easy with her money the whole town has a grudge against her. I've bin at Mary's Hill more than twenty years, and she's treated me fair and generous."

The inspector took action, with the result that a certain James Pitter was caught after dark chalking an offensive challenge on Miss Jeudwine's gate. The inspector went up to the house and asked to see Miss Jeudwine. She saw him. He was a very big man with a fiery yet good-natured face, and a fist like a good-sized boxing glove.

"We have caught the person who has been defacing your gate, miss. Do you wish to prosecute?"

Miss Jeudwine said that she did not wish to prosecute, and the inspector, whose work in life had not taught him to be a complete idealist, wondered whether her disinclination to prosecute was inspired by fear.

She asked him the name of her enemy.

"A man named Pitter."

Miss Jeudwine had never heard of him.

"I can't understand it," she said. "Did he give you any reason, inspector?"

The inspector looked embarrassed.

"He talked a lot of wild stuff, Miss Jeudwine."

"Please tell me."

"It's not very——"

"I want you to tell me. It interests me more than you suspect."

The inspector told her what the man Pitter had told him, and his great solemn, red face changed its gravity for a look of astonishment, for Miss Jeudwine was laughing, and she laughed till the tears came.

"You really must excuse me, inspector. But if you knew the real facts——"

She looked at the big man.

"Well, I will tell you—if you will promise to keep my secret. Nobody else in Wallingdon has any idea——"

"I'll try to, miss."

She told him the whole tale, and when she had completed it she found him looking at her with blue-eyed homage.

"You ought to prosecute, miss," he said.

"Why?"

"It's a duty to yourself, a duty to all of us, your duty to this blackguard. People ought to know."

She smiled her gently determined smile.

"Inspector, do you think I am a happy woman?"

"I should say so, miss."

"Well, what is all this nonsense to me? It can't touch my happiness. I have never studied Wallingdon, and I cannot complain if Wallingdon does not love me. Let the man go."

"But—my dear lady——"

"Inspector, I bear no grudge. For the first time since I have lived here Wallingdon has given me a good laugh."

They left it at that, though the inspector had no illusions as to what the result would be, and though he warned Mr. Pitter that Miss Jeudwine had treated him generously, and that a decent man would keep his mouth shut.

Mr. Pitter was not a decent man.

"She daren't touch me, that's it. 'She's an old humbug, and she knows it."

The inspector had a great longing to apply that big fist of his to Mr. Pitter's nose.

"You are too cheap for her to trouble about, my lad."

"Oh, am I! I'm not a dirty parasite, anyway, and I'm not paid to protect parasites."

"I know your sort," said the big man, "you are the new kind of bastard Englishman, a cross between a monkey and a Mr. Marx."

So it continued to be assumed in Wallingdon that Miss Jeudwine was not only a miserly person but a hypocrite, and that she had some disreputable secret the nature of which any world-wise person could infer. The superstition lingered till one wet November night when Miss Jacks on returning from some merciful adventure was run over by a motor-bus in Newington Causeway. She was fatally injured, but she was conscious. She asked to be taken to the Jeudwine Hostel.

And there she died, but not friendless

or in solitude. Women and girls crept up the stairs, and stood for a moment in the little room. Many of them kissed her; many had wet eyes.

"Dear old Jack, the best sport as ever was."

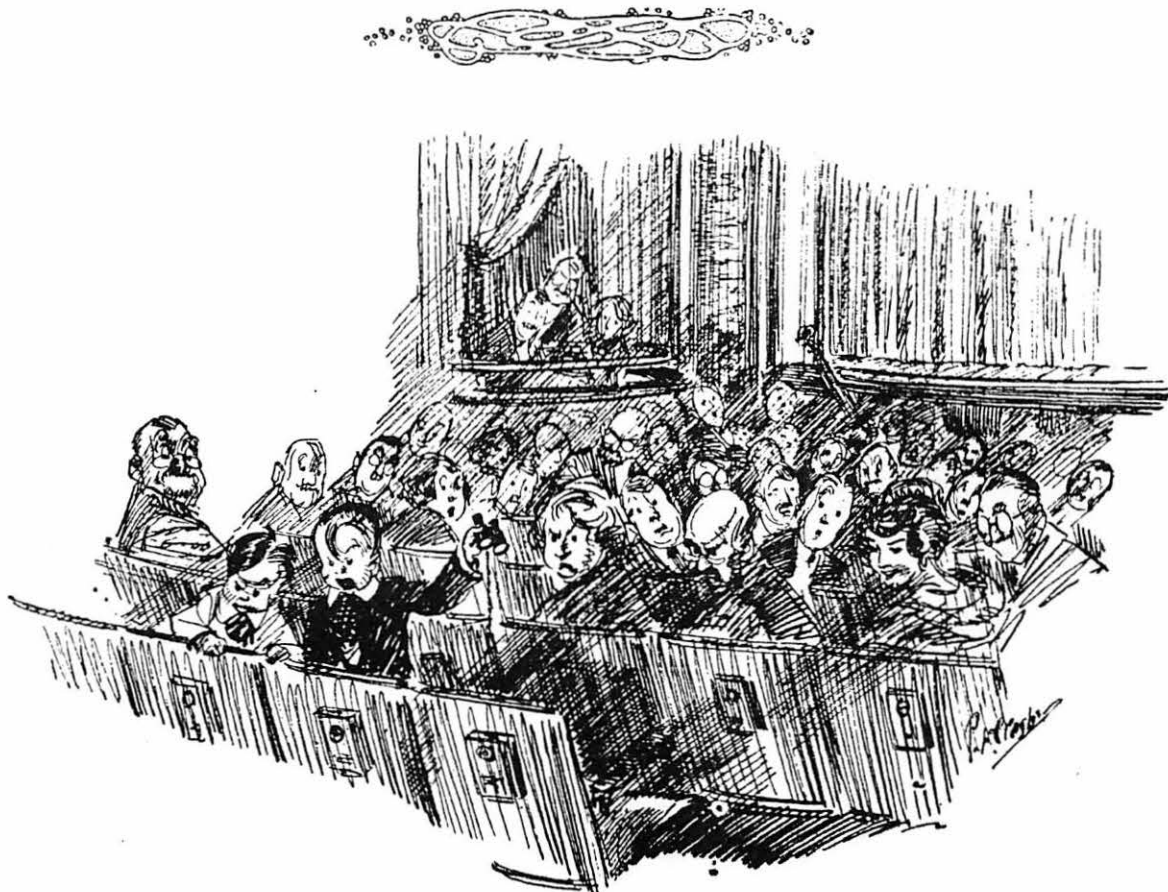
Two days later her secret was discovered. It was spread about by the Press, and some young journalist wrote a rather beautiful article on the little woman with two lives and two names.

Wallingdon had very little to say, for Wallingdon had a feeling that Miss Jeudwine must have enjoyed some divine laughter. It gave her no epitaph; it was a little ashamed of what had been scrawled on her green gate.

But someone supplied an epitaph. A big man with a fiery, round face, sneaking up to Mary's Hill in the darkness, produced an electric torch and a piece of chalk, and then fled like a shy boy.

"She was a great little woman."

Toms read that on the gate in the morning. He said Amen to it. And those chalked letters remained on the gate until the new owner had it repainted.



"Hey! What's the idea of this chain? I paid me sixpence!"

PARTNER WANTED

By
Warwick Deeping

Illustrated by STANLEY DAVIS

SWITZERLAND in June, and the shade temperature standing at ninety degrees. John Calverley came down through the spruce wood from the Brienzer Grat with the skin burnt off his bare knees, and his face red and peeling. He was on a tramping tour, hatless, collarless, in cream shirt and brown shorts, and if after a wet Spring in England he had dreamed of odes to the sun, Apollo had blazed his arrows at him. John Calverley was that strange creature, a poet.

The girl was sitting in the garden of the Hôtel Schiller under the shade of a pollarded chestnut tree, a dark young woman with one of those rare white skins that neither burn nor freckle. She had a book in her lap and a tea-table beside her, and her grass-green frock looked as cool as the tree's shadow. Above the roofs of Brienz she could see the blue blicker of the lake and the shimmer of heat over the meadows. She, too, was alone and on a holiday, but not courting damage to her complexion, or perspiring ecstasies upon the mountains.

No doubt it was right and fitting that John Calverley should stay at the Hôtel Schiller, for the inn boasted of having housed a trio of famous poets, but Miss Ann Garton was hardly the predestined guest of such a place. She could not read poetry. And most certainly she had never read Mr. Calverley's poems, nor had she ever heard of the poet.

She was lighting a cigarette when John came up the stone steps to the hotel garden, having managed to secure an attic room. She observed him. She noted the little fair beard, the inflamed forehead and nose, and the peeling knees. He still carried his rucksack, and he stood there rather shyly, looking about him with what she described as "lost-dog eyes." Every table was occupied, and obviously he was tired and thirsty.

A little, fat Swiss waitress appeared with a tea-tray, and he appealed to her.

"No room anywhere, I'm afraid."

"No, monsieur, but perhaps in twenty minutes. . . ."

Miss Garton, obeying a sudden impulse, took pity on him.

"I've finished. The gentleman can have my table."

He looked at her and smiled.

"Very good of you, but I don't want to——"

"I've finished."

"Thanks awfully. After fifteen miles one's rather ready to sit down."

She withdrew to a chair a couple of yards from the table, and he sat down, dropping his rucksack on the grass beside him. Miss Garton continued to observe him over her book. She described him to herself as a nice lad gone badly highbrow. She would have said, had she been completely frank with him, "What you need, my lad, is a shave and some lanoline."

He seemed conscious of her scrutiny, and perhaps he was conscious of more than her scrutiny. She looked so delightfully fresh and cool, a green and white shadow-woman, but with a face that was vital and vivid. He fidgeted. He extracted a cigarette-case from the breast pocket of his shirt, opened it, and found it empty.

She saw him smile rather helplessly.

"No ammunition?"

He looked startled. He blushed.

"No. I suppose they stock them?"

"Only gaspers. Have one of mine." She held out an open cigarette-case.

"Thanks awfully. I seem to be . . ."

"A little blistered."

"Yes, I am rather. Pretty fierce up there."

He did possess some matches, and as he lit his cigarette, his shy brown eyes observed her.

"Doesn't affect you."

"I don't let it. But hadn't you better order your tea? They are rather pushed here."



Suddenly he began to talk with a kind of wilful frankness that puzzled her until she realized that something singular had happened to them both.

"Of course. I'm afraid I forget things, and this sun has given me a bit of a head."

She thought, "You dear silly ass, what do you expect? No hat, and the sun like a mass of radium, and you, after months in an office, perhaps." But she said, "Why not take some aspirin?"

He hadn't any aspirin. She had, but was she expected to provide him with everything?

So it began, as such affairs do begin, something as the result of mere propinquity, but in this case as a clash of contrasts. His air of long-legged, brown-eyed innocence piqued her. He seemed to be rather a helpless creature, attractively so, and she was not at all helpless. Neither was she maternal. He sat and talked to her for a while after he had had his tea.

He had begun by saying "Do you mind if I talk to you a little?" and she had replied by saying that the human voice was made for use.

"Do you paint?" she asked.

"No, not exactly. I use words, or try to."

"Novels?"

Almost he looked hurt. "No, poetry."

So, that was it! Her eyes seemed to narrow as she considered his little blond beard. Was that appendage necessary, part of the inspiration, or was it a pose?

She said, "I've never met a poet."

Her candour appeared to scare him.

"Oh, I don't want to talk shop. I'm just made that way. I don't make much money. And you—?"

She prevaricated. "I'm just a wench with a job that suits me. Not easy for our generation, so I'm lucky. How's Switzerland for inspiration?"

She saw his eyelids flicker, and she wondered whether she had frightened him. She had. He seemed to become restless, and his conversation desultory.

He said, "I think I'll try and get a bath. I've got a bit scorched."

"I shouldn't put water on that skin," she said.

He stared. "Oughtn't I?"

"Of course not. You're the sensitive sort. Go and buy a tube of fanoline."

He got to his feet, upsetting his chair in doing so. Was it as bad as all that? She watched him pick up the chair and collect his rucksack. Unfeminine interference! She could picture him hurrying up to his room and examining his poor scorched face in a mirror. And that exactly was what he did. What was more, he went out to explore Brienz; and in a shop of various merchandise he managed to buy a tube of face-cream.

He appeared at dinner in grey flannel trousers badly in need of pressing, and a brown sports jacket that was much crumpled. Obviously a tramp's luggage was limited. The

Hôtel Schiller was not a luxury hotel, and it was accustomed to bare knees and youth somewhat in a state of nature, and Miss Garton did not put on an evening frock. She remained My Lady Green-sleeves. The hotel had a verandah covered with vines and roses, and after dinner she took her coffee there. He joined her.

"May I come here?"

She smiled at him. "Not having coffee? They are rather good on coffee."

He said, almost with an air of brusqueness, "I can't afford coffee." So that was his attitude for the moment! She did not invite him to share her coffee. He lit a cigarette, and sitting down, watched a series of cars and motor-coaches roar past the hotel. His face suggested that the noise and the dust revolted him.

"Beastly things."

"Don't you like them?"

"Loathe them. Horrible mechanical toys. Make people just like a lot of crude and nasty children."

"Well, that rather depends. You will be asking me whether I am car-minded."

"And are you?"

"I use a car, with emphasis on the use."

"Utility, oh, yes."

"No poetry in speed?"

"Noiseless speed, like a gull gliding. I wonder if it is quieter down by the lake."

"Yes, it's rather lovely there. Why shouldn't we stroll?"

He looked at her eagerly. "Would you? A street like this is so damnably new."

She humoured him and herself. She was beginning to think of him as one of those creatures with only half a skin. It wasn't a pose, but just sensitive temperament. Too much temperament? It didn't do in these days, unless you could afford it.

They went down to the lake and followed a path between the village gardens and the water. And suddenly he began to talk about himself with a kind of wilful frankness that puzzled her until she realized that something singular had happened to them both.

"I live in an attic, you know, off the Gray's Inn Road."

"Do you?"

"Yes, I have an unearned income of twenty-three pounds a year, and I make about a pound a week, reviewing books and that sort of thing."

Almost she had said "So poetry doesn't pay," but that would have been too brutal and obvious. But why was he telling her this? Had he developed an attack of dreadful sincerity, and wished her to understand?

They strolled as the dusk came down through the smell of hay in the meadows, and she felt his eyes looking at her with a kind of innocent, wondering awe. Was he so very susceptible, or was this occasion different? She had no quarrel with the

suddenness and the strangeness of his adoration. It flattered her as woman, but also the secret woman in her preferred it to the hearty slappings and easy intimacies of the cad-in-a-car world. She had seen rather too much of that crude, Breezy Bertie community.

He said, "The twilight's quite blue. And do you see that little silver streak of mist over there?"

She saw it. "Like a piece of white gauze over the night's hair." (Gosh, was she becoming poetical?)

of them were inwardly quaking, but she managed to appear casually candid. "So you know, now," she said. "I wondered if you would turn up."



He was silent for a moment. "Do you live in the country?" he asked.

"Yes."

"You're lucky."

And then she realized that he was trying to find out where she lived and what her particular job was. She did not tell him. Somehow, she did not want to tell him on this perfect and untroubled night. Petrol and rubber and oil! They had not yet been transmuted into poetry.

They spent the next day together, wandering in the woods. He seemed to desire the shade; that and the lanoline he had used was soothing to his skin. He had none of the tricks of the Breezy Bertie. There seemed something sacred about him, and she was thrilled.

She told him that she was going on to Interlaken.

"When?"

"To-morrow."

"So am I. By boat?"

No, she was going by road. She had to confess that she had a car with her, and somehow she felt guilty. "I can give you a lift."

His face seemed to close up. "No, thanks, I'll walk. And where are you staying?"

"The Victoria."

She remembered that the Victoria was the most expensive hotel in the place.

WHEN she came downstairs next morning to take her coffee and rolls in the garden she found that he had gone. She was conscious of feeling troubled about him. Obviously, he was one of those rare and sensitive creatures who still take life and love with passionate seriousness. Had he funk'd his crisis and fled, because he had scruples on the economic problem? That, too, was rather rare. She knew half a dozen young men who lived loudly and largely and almost impertinently upon the incomes of their wives.

She was piqued. She packed, paid her bill, ran her sports coupé out of the garage, and took the road to Interlaken. She would arrive there in less than an hour, but it would take him several hours to do the journey on foot. The road swung up and down above the lake, and some seven miles from Brienz, she saw him ahead of her, climbing a long, sunlit slope.

She overtook him, and slowing to a crawl, hailed him through the offside window.

"Good morning. Why not ride?"

He looked at her and at her car. It was a luxury car, and his eyes hated it.

"No, thanks. Exercise, you know."

"Well, dump your pack in here. I'll drop it at your hotel."

"Please don't bother. Besides, I haven't an hotel yet."

"Oh, all right," and she drove on, feeling piqued by his pride, but applauding it.

She did not see him in Interlaken. She sat out in the garden of the Hôtel Victoria before and after dinner, with fountains playing, and the trees throwing a pleasant shade. She watched the evening sunlight on the Jungfrau, and the people passing between the hotel garden and the grassland over the way. She expected him to come to her, but he did not appear.

She idled about Interlaken all next day, but he remained invisible. She began to think that he had disappeared from her life like the proverbial ship passing in the night, but as she sat outside her hotel in the cool of the evening, she saw him come hesitantly to the near gate and stand there. The Victoria's loggia was full of boiled-shirts and evening frocks, and his sports jacket and shabby grey trousers did not conform.

She waved to him, and leaving her chair, went down the drive to the gate. His face troubled her. It had a kind of drawn, crucified look. He did not smile when he spoke to her.

"Oh, I just wanted to tell you that I'm off to England to-morrow."

She made herself smile. "Come in and have a little drink."

He looked past her at the prosperous patrons of the Hôtel Victoria.

"Rather not. Above my standard. I just wondered—"

He became voiceless for a moment.

"Whether you'd tell me where you live."

"I might. In Wiltshire. About two miles from Quenborough."

"Quenborough. I've stayed there."

"My place is called White Ways."

He looked very grave.

"Country place, I suppose?"

"Not quite. It's on the main road close to the Camelot cross-roads."

"Camelot!"

He seemed to utter that Arthurian word with a poet's emotion.

"I'll remember. If I'm tramping, might I—?"

"Of course. I'll give you tea."

And suddenly he smiled at her in an anguished sort of way, and walking backwards for a step or two, swung round and made off with his hands in his trouser pockets.

SHE wondered whether she would see him again. She wanted to see him again, and though she believed that a month's absence and much attention to business cured one of such yearnings, she found herself thinking of him continually.

She returned to her own little world in Wiltshire, and became once again the active young woman of affairs. She had made a considerable success of her own particular adventure, and perhaps she had been rather cocky about it, but material success

satisfied her less than it had done. She might say to herself, "What an idiot you are, getting sentimental about a lad with lost-dog's eyes and a beard! Cut it out," but the *tendresse* remained.

Had she been watching the roads for him she would not have seen him arrive, because he had avoided the highways and came tramping over the great green hill. He struck the west road just opposite the white service-station with its row of blue and green petrol pumps. Two cars were being refuelled, and he crossed the road and spoke to the lad in white overalls who was screwing on the cap of a petrol tank.

"Can you tell me the way to White Ways?"

The lad gave him a terse look.

"You're there."

"I mean, Miss Garton's place."

"I'm telling you. It's here."

Camelot and a service-station and roadhouse! He recrossed the road and, walking some fifty yards across the turf, sat down on the bank and stared at the buildings in front of him, the long, low white roadhouse with its blue shutters, and its garden with blue-and-white umbrellas.

Its loggia seemed full of people having tea. To the right of it stood the service-station, ready to trade petrol and oil, or to elevate your car on a hydraulic platform, and oil and grease it. You could have air for your tyres, or your car could be valeted. A hard tennis-court too, and a small bathing-pool. The picture was complete.

So this was her world, completely modern and movietone! Romance in reinforced concrete, with petrol pumps for Arthurian knights in armour! He felt a little scared of it and of her. How could he dream as a poet of impressing so pragmatical a Guinevere! Besides, she must be making money, and he could make a bitter pun out of pen and penury.

A waitress came to her in the office.

"Oh, Miss, there's a gentleman asking for you."

"What name?"

"Calverley."

She felt her forehead flushing.

"Ask him to come here, Rose."

Both of them were inwardly quaking, but she managed to appear casually candid.

"So you know now. I wondered if you would turn up. Yes, this is my holy of holies. Come and look round."

She showed him over the place, explaining during the demonstration how she had been inspired to risk all her capital in the venture. "I had a brain-wave. Managed to sit down just where two of the big roads cross, north and south, east and west." They came to the bathing-pool, and were confronted by a young man just emerging, an offensively good-looking young man with wet, crinkly hair. He had a round head and face, slightly protuberant and insolent blue eyes, and an air of supreme self-satisfaction.

"Hallo, Ann, come and splash."

"Thanks, I have work to do."

The young man glanced at Calverley.

"Hallo, a Chelsea Bun, I think. How do?"

Calverley's eyes were not the eyes of a poet. He gave the very good-looking young man a little, homicidal smile, and turned his back on him.

They walked on.

"Who's that fellow?"

SHE made her voice sound casual. "One of my patrons. I get quite a lot of things like that. Apt to be bothersome. I say, you don't happen to know anything about golf?"

"Golf?"

"Yes."

He laughed, but his laugh had an edge to it.

"As a matter of fact, I do. I was a half blue for it up at Oxford. Yes, I had a scholarship. It was the one game, somehow, that intrigued me. Can't afford it now."

"Want a job?"

"What kind of job?"

"I have been thinking of a little nine-hole course. Yes, I own about a hundred acres of the hillside. This used to be a farm. There's the old house. I live in it. Well, what about it?"

"You want me to lay out a course?"

"It would be useful. I don't know what a golf architect's fees would be."

"Nothing."

"Don't be silly."

"I said nothing."

"Well, that's off."

"It needn't be. I'm camping. Left my kit at a farm. I could camp out here, and do the lay-out for you. I might even do some of the work. A spade's been one of my tools, on holidays."

"All for nothing?"

He wanted to say "All for love," but he didn't, and she understood him.

She said, "Well, would your High and Mightiness accept meals?"

"I might."

"In my restaurant?"

"I'll think it over."

"But the golf-course. You see, people stay a few days, and they like to do things. It's a restless age."

"Yes, I'll try to work that for you."

"Can I send a car for your kit?"

"I can hump it. I'm not exactly a weed."

She glanced at him slantwise. He wasn't. He looked brown and fit and strong, but she did wish he would shave off that beard.

That night he was camped in a little hollow under a beech wood about two hundred yards from White Ways. The impertinent and good-looking young blighter's wit had functioned. Calverley cooked his own supper that night over a



primus stove, and later he heated up some water over the stove, and shaved off his beard.

Probably she was the first person to observe the shedding of that appendage, but she was most careful not to show any surprise at its absence. Meanwhile, he borrowed some green dahlia stakes from her garden shed. Had she any red flannel? Red flannel! Was it likely? He explained that he wanted the stuff for sighting flags. Well, she was going into Quenborough to row the butcher for sending her bad meat, and she would buy him some red cloth.

She saw him striding about the hillside, deciding on distances and greens and tees. He was deigning to come in for his meals, and in the White Ways

restaurant he appeared to be looking for a particular person, Mr. Bertie Barter, the offensively good-looking young man. She did not see them meet, but meet they did.

"Morning, morning; rats been nibbling in the night?"

"I beg your pardon!"

"The Chelsea Bun, you know."

"Go to hell," said the poet.

The plan of the golf-course grew, and Mr. Barter departed in his car, but he reappeared for the weekend, and Calverley, going down in the evening to Ann's farmhouse, found Mr. Barter sprawling on the sofa. John, with a face that looked both fierce



*face was murderous. He said,
"Come outside, will you.
Get up and come outside."*

and frozen, was for withdrawing, but Ann called him back.

"John, don't go. I want to talk about the course. Have you a sketch or anything?"

He had one in his pocket. She made him sit down at the table, and seating herself rather close to him, she began to exert silent pressure upon Bertie. She made it obvious that he was a superfluity, but Mr. Barter was an offensively vain young man. He became facetious,

rather unpleasantly so, until she flashed out at him.

"Oh, shut up, and get out. We're busy."

He went, but with an air of sly complacency.

"Why do you have that fellow here?" Calverley asked.

"I've had a series of them. They're not so easy to discourage. The cheek of three devils. I think he's about the worst of the series. Sex appeal! He thinks he is worth half a dozen Clark Gables."

John Calverley was biting the end of a pencil.

"He wants kicking hard and well."

"My dear, I only take size three in shoes."

ONCE again Mr. Barter departed, and so did "Alfred" on his fortnight's holiday. Alfred was Miss Garton's plain, good man. A first-class mechanic, he ran the service-station for her, and was responsible at night for wayward people who needed help or petrol. "Open All Night" was the White Ways motto, and Alfred slept in a room attached to the service-station. He was not roused very often, but the chance was there.

Not until the middle of the week did John discover that Ann had taken over night duty at the service-station. He was troubled.

"I say, I don't think you ought to."

"Worried about my morals?"

"No. But I don't like the idea—car-thieves and so on. Look here, I'm going to take over that job."

"Really, there's no need."

He became quite fierce about it.

"You'll go and sleep in your own bed, and leave me to understudy Alfred."

"Oh, very well. You can ring me up if you're in trouble. I'm a bit of an expert with cars. There's a telephone, you know."

"To the farmhouse?"

"Yes, to both bedroom and sitting-room."

Her poet was progressing, but she was not priggish in her pride of purpose. Being a determined young person, she had decided upon her particular partner, and she hoped to persuade him that he could join her in selling petrol, and continue to write poetry. She was reading some of his poems, and in her new romantic mood finding them poignant and personal.

IT happened, but not as she had expected it to happen. Calverley had been called out about eleven at night to supply two touring cars with petrol, and in attending to business he had failed to notice that another car had pulled into the White Ways car park. He was re-entering the garage when he heard the telephone ringing. He hurried over to it, and picked up the receiver.

"Hallo."

"Is that you, John?"

"Yes."

"Ann speaking. I want you, John, quickly."

Her voice ceased suddenly, and Calverley hung up the receiver, and ran. It took him about fifteen

seconds to reach the house, and there in the sitting-room he found Ann standing in a corner with a little automatic in her hand, and Bertie Barter sprawling on the sofa by the window.

"John, this cad tried to—"

The man on the sofa laughed.

"Don't be silly. Can't a fellow have his joke?"

Calverley's face was murderous. He said, "Come outside, will you? Get up, and come outside."

Ann Garton stood and listened with a kind of breathlessness to the sounds that came to her from the garden. She had laid her toy pistol down on the table. Her face had a poignant look, and the sharp pallor of suspense.

She heard a fierce voice speaking.

"Come on, you swine, get out—run. If you ever come back here again, by God I'll kill you."

She folded her arms over her breasts, and with a little shudder of exultation, hugged the triumph to herself. She heard a car being driven away, and she recognized the particular car's noisy note. But there were footsteps. He came into the room looking very pale, his hair half over his forehead, lower lip bleeding, his shirt torn open.

"That fellow won't worry you again."

She rushed to him.

"Oh, my dear, your lip's bleeding. He hasn't hurt you, has he?"

"I did most of the hurting."

"Oh, Jack, I'm so, so worried."

How her head came on to his shoulder is not part of the story, but his arms were round her, and both of them were trembling.

"Ann, my sweet, you mustn't shake like this."

"I can't help it. I've been feeling so lonely. The thing's getting beyond me, somehow. It wants a man about the place."

"My darling, I—"

"I want someone I can trust."

Very gently he put a hand under her chin and raised her face.

"You exquisite thing. If only . . ."

"Only, what? My dear, why be so furiously proud with me? If you're jealous of my show, I'll chuck it."

"Jealous? God forbid!"

"Then, come and help me. Let's make it our show. And after all, my lamb, you can write poetry. I love your poetry. Promise you won't ever stop writing it, dear."

He looked at her steadfastly.

"By heaven, you're the most exquisite poem of all. And by heaven, life's good. One ought to live it, master it, as well as scribble about it. But aren't you getting the worst of the bargain?"

"Don't be silly," she said. "I'm getting both a poet and a partner. If one can't run life and a job together . . ."

"Well?"

"We're pretty poor specimens."

PARADISE INCORPORATED

by WARWICK DEEPING

author of "Sorrell and Son"

ILLUSTRATED BY HARVÉ STEIN



AN EVENTFUL SUMMER
IN THE LIFE OF A GLOOMY MILLION-
AIRE BACHELOR WHO WAS SEEKING
REST, AND FOUND ROMANCE AND
ADVENTURE • THE STORY OF AN
IDEAL CITY WHICH READS NOT
UNLIKE THE EPIC OF OUR PLAN-
LESS FEAR-DRIVEN WORLD

This novel, like all other novels printed in Redbook, is purely fiction and intended as such. It does not refer to real characters or to actual events.

A COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL OVER 50,000 WORDS



***E**ACH of them was partly responsible for Paul's suicide; each of them knew it. And yet, somehow and in some way, that gruesome tragedy made Ann realize for the first time that she was about to fall in love with Richard. Meeting him now, on the threshold of the Coroner's office, she could no longer pretend her indifference. They needed each other. It was foreordained that they should create that "Paradise Incorporated"—Bluewater.*

green door. Painted pottery and statues were displayed in one of the windows. At the back Hattersley had his workshop, which was open to interested visitors, who could watch Paul in his white smock modeling a Pan or painting a vase with squids and snakes and crocuses in the style of Crete.

So Paul, poor devil, had one of his headaches—which, superimposed upon heartache, would exaggerate his fierce pallor. Archie Stout had never had a headache, and he was more prosperous than his neighbors. He knew how to run a hotel, and the Golden Anchor had collected a moderate clientele, people who came to lounge and to bathe and to play golf.

Stout walked into Hattersley's cottage. Bluewater had lost the habit of locking doors, emotional or otherwise; for there was so little to steal, and Eros shot as he listed. Hatterley was in bed and awake.

"Who's that?"

The voice seemed to come out of a dark cave. The bedroom door was half open, and Stout pushed it back.

"Hallo, old man. Got any aspirin?"

The interior of the room was dim but vaguely disheveled. Hattersley slept on an old box mattress. His head was visible, with its black and insurgent hair, deep eyes and intense pallor. An old sugar-box by the bed served as a table.

Hattersley growled at the man in the sweater:

"Just keeping quiet, that's all. Be all right in an hour or two."

Stout nodded at him. He knew that the one thing that Hattersley could not tolerate was pity, for there was in Hattersley a secret pride that raged. A silent and somber creature, he was full of internal rages against life's frustrations, and the penury that the world imposes upon the creative fellow who is not popular. There were occasions when Paul erupted like a volcano, and the product could scorch and burn.

"Freda was going to bring you some tea, old man."

"She needn't bother."

"I'm sending you along some tea. Save you trouble. . . . Now, look here, damn you, don't make a scene over a cup of tea. I'm feeling touchy."

Hattersley made a little writhing movement, and then seemed to stiffen.

"All right—and go to hell!"

"I'm going to eggs and bacon with the Squirrel. Like the door pulled to?"

"Yes."

Stout had reached the outer door when he heard the other man's voice:

"Stout—I'm a damned swine."

"That's news to me; don't be silly. We are all in the same boat, my lad. Breakfast calling."

RETURNING to the sunlight of that perfect morning, Stout climbed one of the tussocky mounds, and pausing there, saw bathers crossing the strip of shingle—young Derrek Fielden, the Wilmer girls, Jim and June Jettison, and Gilda Merriman. The Jettison dog, a half-caste Sealyham called Slump, was barking the party into the water. Derrek and the Wilmer girls rushed in holding hands. Jimmy Jettison, rotund and blue, squirmed mincingly over the shingle. His wife sported a cerise-colored wrapper. The sunlight caught the blonde heads of Gwen and Maisie, and the copper mop of Derrek. Mrs. Merriman, tall, mature, with hair the color of honey, followed at her suave leisure, deliberate and strong. Her neck was shapely, her bosom full; and in her eyes the blue of the sea was answered.

Young Fielden was splashing the girls. Both girls were in love with him, but Eros had shot Derrek with another arrow. Jimmy Jettison, turning a somersault, came up blowing, and laughed at his wife, who waded in with hands brushing the water. Gilda Merriman stood with her feet in the prattle of the small waves. What a fine woman she was thought Stout. And not merely in the flesh. If anybody had kept Bluewater from going pornographic and potty, that person was Gilda. These young things adored her. And so did— But damn it, when a woman wouldn't bother to divorce a fool-beast of a husband who was some-

where in Africa, and who cadged from her! Women were strange creatures. Stout trudged off across the sand to the Golden Anchor. He had invited the Squirrel to breakfast, and Paul the Potter had to be provided with tea.

Chapter Two

AT the Four Firs in Stone Stile Lane on the high ground above the Rothersea Road, a girl was loading egg-boxes into a blue light van. The four Scotch firs on their knoll towered high beside the white farm gate. Six white ducks were swimming in a pond. A shaggy hedge was full of may-blossom, and beyond a low stone wall Darwin tulips, wallflowers and forget-me-not shared with a few old apple trees and standard roses the conventions of a front garden.

Ann Jerrard, with an egg-box held below her bosom, paused to remember something. She pushed the box into the van, closed the doors, and with the air of a young woman who had no time to consider a May day's miraculous moods, she went as far as the gate in the wall and shouted:

"Sarah!"

Her voice, like her face, had no flickering shades. It was clear and immediate and candid. It brought Sarah to the kitchen window.

"Yes, miss."

"Keep an eye on Will. He's supposed to be cleaning out Number One house. Just look in—casually."

"Yes, miss."

"I shall be back to lunch. Anything wanted from Westling?"

"Tea's rather low, miss. And could you get me a few new dish-cloths?"

"Right."

Ann slipped into the driving seat, and with a crisp slam closed the door. Sarah was a good soul who could attend devotedly to domestic details. The Four Firs poultry boy was devoted to other things, cigarettes and sex and moments of vacuous meditation, or a seat on the corn-bin with yesterday's *Daily Star*. There was nothing express about William, but lads were scarce, and Ann Jerrard was a realist.

She hustled the van out on its morning round. She was bound for Bluewater and Westling and Stilehurst. Bluewater knew her as a dark young woman in red knitted cap and a white mackintosh or linen coat. She was variously familiar as Miss Jerrard, or the egg-girl, or as Ann. Stout, who loved teasing people, even pragmatical young women with straight black eyebrows and firm lips and chin, had suggested the obvious transfiguration.

"When are you going to take to breeches, Ann?"

She had given him one of her whimsical oblique glances: "Is it—necessary?"

It wasn't, though she had the legs for breeches. She was long and clean and supple, but not too long. The swing of her short skirt carried conviction and no self-conscious sex-appeal, though her provocation could be positive. Some of Bluewater's young men had been silly about her in the girlish way of the period, as though all the virility were hers, which bore out Archie Stout's contention that in post-war England the girls had the guts; but that was putting it crudely.

She both liked her job and loathed it. It was very much a whole-time job, and in winter it began in the darkness and ended in darkness. To begin with, an elderly relative whom she particularly detested had taken it upon himself to warn her:

"My dear Ann, you can't make chicken-farming pay. You will lose your capital."

Her urge had been to retort with, "Rats!" At the age of five she would have put her tongue out; but at the age of thirty, one's self-picture has to hang with some dignity—the portrait of a dark young woman who was self-sufficient. She had had to learn her job; she had made mistakes: incubators had played tricks on her; fowls had died on her; foxes had marauded. She had put up wire. She had bought her van, and worked up a round and a market of her own. Moreover, the farm was paying, not luxuriously, but she managed to live.



ANN

Bluewater had been of considerable assistance to her, but Bluewater stranded by the slump had ceased to be a very paying proposition. She could divine its fear and frustration, hunger, moments of agonized depression. The world crisis had left Bluewater between the devil and the deep sea, a devil who presented bills for payment and refused further credit. . . .

Her car passed the gates of Moor Hall, two stone pillars supporting lions rampant. She had a glimpse of a weedy drive, an avenue of oaks and the darkness of a distant cedar. The oaks were all young gold. A big white board advertised the fact that Moor Hall was for sale.

Ann had some cause to regret the emptiness of Moor Hall. In the Mallison days the house had bought from her six or seven dozen eggs a week, and paid for them.

Her right brake-drum squeaked all the way down the steep hill into Bluewater. It annoyed her. She would have to get that brake-lining attended to. She pulled her van onto the grass opposite the real-estate office, swung the door open and stepped out.

Gerald Maggs addressed her.

"Brakes rather noisy, Miss Jerrard."

"Morning, Mr. Maggs. Sold Moor Hall yet?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, the London office has had an inquiry."

"Nothing serious?"

"I'm expecting some one to view."

"A home for the mentally deficient?"

"Might be good for trade, Miss Jerrard. Even idiots eat eggs."

Ann smiled and walked on.

She took the path to Paul the Potter's. Hattersley owed her five and three pence, and hated himself and her for it, because he was in love with Ann. She was so cool and clean and efficient, like a pool into which you plunged when your secret soul felt noisome. Yes, Paul was a different proposition. Her face seemed to darken a little as she entered his gate. One hinge was tied up with string. Hattersley, coming home one night in a black rage against life and everything, had kicked in the gate.

She paused under the loggia, half in shade, half in shadow. Paul's door was open. She laid the bag of eggs on a bench upon which he sometimes displayed a vase or a statue. She was about to slip away; but Hattersley, acutely sensitive, as was his way when a headache was passing, had heard her footsteps. He was still in bed. He sat up.

"Who's that?"

She turned and walked toward the gate; but before she reached it, she heard something pushed over, and the padding of bare feet.

"Take those damned things away."

He was in his pajamas—pajamas that had once been blue, and were now the color of stale cream. His head was disheveled.

She paused. His excitement shocked her. She understood it, and the anguish and anger of it.

She said: "Paul, don't be silly."

His eyes looked like two dark pits. He had not shaved.

"Take the damned things."

"I sha'n't."

She walked out of the gate, drew it to and looked at him.

"My dear, don't be silly."

He seemed to sway in the doorway. He took two steps forward, clutched the bag, and hurled it against the white fence. Yellow splodges!

"Go to hell! Another six to my—"

"You ass! I hate waste."

"Waste!"

He seemed to twist like a man on a rope. He stumbled back through the doorway, cursed something, and slammed the door.

How pathetic and absurd and tragic! He had stubbed a toe. And he could not pay her five and three pence! Was that tragedy? Undoubtedly it was.

SHE returned to her car and drove it up Bluewater's main highway to the point just short of Gulverin Cove. The Mallison nomenclature persisted, flamboyant and colorful. He had preached color and effective posing, even in the matter of pajamas. There is a child in every man or woman, and an artist's playfulness appeals to the child. Hence, Culverin Cove and Mermaid's Walk, Spaniard's Point, and the rocks beyond the Anchor jetty christened by Mallison "Pieces of Eight." He had insisted on Stout's keeping a parrot that screamed: "I'm a devil—I'm a devil." Even the beach huts on the Main, little white buildings with classic porticoes, carried each an original title—Hengest, Nautilus, Sea Holly, Thrift, Goldilocks, Hesperus, the Royals. Mallison had not only conceived beauty, but had prolonged it with passion into every detail. The simple, "self-colored" buildings were like so many flowers, gay, brilliant and somehow haunting the memory.

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MISS JERRARD pulled up by Nankin. Carter, the one-legged car-park attendant, stumped out, saw the egg-van, and turned tail like a disappointed dog. Ann had a box of eggs for Nankin. Selma Dewhurst in a green overall was repainting some of the tea-room chairs. The color-scheme was egg-shell white and Chinese blue.

"Thanks. How much?"

"Three shillings."

Ann was paid, for Selma had a small private income of her own.

"Anything doing?"

"My dear, flat fish! I'm thinking of inveigling a cinema magnate down here and of murdering him."

Ann laughed.

"One ought to work some stunt. 'The murder at the Golden Anchor!' I'll suggest it to Archie."

She turned back to the Jettison building. Jimmy Jettison was walking up and down his studio rather like a small stage *Hamlet*. He had a piece of paper in his hand. Jimmy Jettison dramatized his emotions, pleasant or otherwise. He had gestures, a most expressive face, little legs that toddled even when they attempted a stride. Slump the dog sat on a chair and watched his master. June Jettison's face seemed to flicker between tears and laughter.

"To be—or not to be? And what's it to be? The gramophone or the poor old Gubbio?"

"Not the Gubbio, Jimmy. They wouldn't appreciate the value—"

"Exactly—exactly! Last time I offered the scoundrels two pictures. No market value. The gramophone it will have to be. Hallo, there's the egg maiden."

He dashed to the door, his velveteen trousers squeaking. He looked like a mischievous child whose tricks were not appreciated by a prosaic world.

"Ever seen one of these things, Miss Ann?"

He waved the paper.

"What is it?"

"A thing called a writ, my dear. We are being pilloried for our rates."

June and the dog joined him in the little portico. The wife's eyes were on Ann's egg-box.

"Jimmy's so—intimate—about things."

Jettison was bending down and tucking the writ under Slump's old collar.

"To the dogs with it!"

Ann swung the egg-box toward June, but the artist's wife smiled faintly and shook her head.

"No, my dear. It can't be done."

"Please. I want Jimmy to do a picture of me—soon—for the old woman. Barter, you know."

Jettison, like a little hungry boy, looked at the egg-box and then at the faces of the women.

"First commission this year! Serious?"

"Absolutely."

"Good egg, good woman. Which do I kiss?"

They laughed. . . .

Ann had no eggs for the Sunflower, but she had to pull up outside the Sunflower anyway. Young Derrek had been watching. He came down the steps in a dark blue pull-over and white flannel trousers. There was a swiftness in his movements, a suggestion of hair burning and blown by the wind, other hunger in the eyes.

She was sorry for Derrek; he was youth rebellious yet enduring; he was a lad of ideas and enthusiasms; he wanted so much to alter things. With his arms crossed on the top of the near door, he leaned toward her as though he wished to stay her van.

"I've been bathing. Why don't you come and bathe sometimes? On a blue day like this—after that dreadful winter."

She looked at him kindly.

"Has it been so dreadful?"

He nodded. She knew that the trustees had kept him on at the Sunflower during the winter at one pound a week, and that during the season—if there should be a season—he was to be paid by results. He was one of these lads whose education has been cut short, and who has had to fend for himself. He had no sharply tempered weapon save his temperament, no professional training, no particular niche. He danced very well. During the previous season he had run the Sunflower with a couple of casual girls as waitresses. You could dance, sun-bathe, buy soft drinks at the Sunflower. Mallison had intended it to be Bluewater's social center, a kind of a country-club by the sea. It was a quite beautiful building of white wood, with doors, windows and domes painted robin's-egg blue. But it had been a gray winter; and young Fielden, all alone, had been writing a novel. Everybody seemed to be writing novels. Gwen Wilmer had been writing a novel with Derrek as its hero, but she had got stuck at the tenth chapter.

Ann had a hand on the gear lever.

"Why don't you come and bathe?"

"Too busy. I have a time-table."

He gave a toss of the head.

"Oh, time, clocks, all these rotten restrictions! I wish we could stop all clocks. Civilization simply runs to the clock. I don't wind my watch now. If we could get away from our time idea!"

She smiled at him. "Chaos."

"No—freedom, the sort of freedom we never enjoy."

"But even you would have to use the sun and the moon."

"Well, why not? Breakfast—when you have bathed, and the sun is a flagstaff-high above Martello. To stop all the damned ticking and egg-boiling and train-running. I'd like to wreck the calendar."

He looked at her burningly.

"Don't you ever play?"

"My job—is from darkness to dusk—in the winter. Hens. Even hens have a time-table of their own."

He shook his flamboyant hair.

"Oh, you're so cool, so efficient. I wish I could be like that. Couldn't you teach me?"

She spoke gently, and put the car in gear.

"We have to teach ourselves. That's a platitude. My round—you know: Archie's, and then Westling, and home to lunch. I have a moron to keep an eye on. What would you do with morons, Derrek?"

"Drown 'em."

He stood back. He realized that her going was inevitable, and that though she was kind to him, her youth did not answer the cry of his youth. . . .

Ann pulled up outside Ye Olde Shoppe. The building was green and white, with a soft brown pantile roof, and it had green bottle-glass in its windows. A little stone-paved forecourt with oak posts and chains separated it from the road. A green and gold sign hung on an iron bracket.

Ann liked stopping at Gilda Merriman's. Gilda was good for one, jocund and strong, and so utterly without humbug. She glowed. Her wisdom was the wisdom of a woman who has lived, not altogether happily, but with a sound appetite for life. You could talk to Gilda. All the young things in Bluewater talked to Gilda. She was a kind of mother-confessor, and knew all about Bluewater's love-affairs.

MRS. MERRIMAN was sitting in a deck-chair in front of the shop. She was writing a letter on her lap, but put the writing-pad aside when Ann appeared.

"A dozen—today. Do I owe you anything?"

"No."

"Come and sit for a minute."

Gilda was as good as the sun. There was a spare deck-chair, and Ann took it. She pulled off her red cap and laid it in her lap.

"I wish some one could do something for Derrek."

"Poor lad. You—can't?"

"No."

"I just wondered. He's rather—"

"It's a rotten time for the young."

Gilda laughed. "You're not exactly a grandmother." Ann looked at the sea.

"Oh, I'm a bit hard. I like to be hard."

"I shouldn't call you hard, my dear. *Efficient's* the word. You like efficiency."

"I think it's rather my joss. It isn't messy and treacherous, if you know what I mean?"

"Quite. Other people can mess things up for you."

And then, Gilda Merriman said a thing that remained in Ann Jerrard's memory:

"But—one has to get out of one's cave. That's why I like to sit out here."

Ann gave her one of those quick oblique glances.

"Cave?"

"Yes. We all live in caves, don't we? The little caves of ourselves. Too much self-absorption and introspection and all that. One has to get out and into things, sun-bathe your soul. If one has a soul."

Ann looked steadily at the blue line of the sea.

"I see what you mean. My job's my cave. Poor Paul seems to have got a pretty bad cave, all green and oozing. Is there anything—"

Gilda looked bothered.

"He won't come out. I don't know whether he is capable of coming out. And after all, life has got him rather caged up in a den. He's so dreadfully poor. He would be better off as somebody's chauffeur; but he would make a terrible chauffeur, poor dear."

Ann nodded.

"Men seem so helpless, some of them. . . . Hallo, there's Archie flagging me. Attention to business. It's the Anchor's omelette day."

She jumped up and stood gazing down at Gilda.

"You are good to look at. . . . I'll reflect on the cave idea. It's suggestive."

Chapter Three

ANN went out to shut up her house. Her day's work was done. In ten minutes Sarah would call her in to supper. She lingered. As Gilda would have expressed it, she came out of her cave to become conscious of the beauty of the sunset. As a modernist and a young woman who had read science for a year, she should have seen the sunset as a mere interaction between the light-rays and the atmosphere, but she did not see it in that way. The sky was both fantastic and flamboyant. The Scotch firs had unfurled red banners. The woods of Moor Manor were both green and black and scarred and creviced with fire. The gorse hills beyond Bluewater seemed to smoke. The sea was a mystic sea. A phrase in a book recurred to her. She was making a mystical misuse of her senses. All this was illusion, or rather—a complex whirl of electrified particles. . . . Something in her laughed.

The voice of Sarah calling:

"Miss Ann—Miss Ann, supper!"

She went in and supped. Then she sat on the sofa under the window and smoked a cigarette.

The dusk deepened. The western sky was pale primrose streaked with slate-colored clouds faintly edged with rose. The smoke from her cigarette floated out the window. She knew that her desk called her; there were bills to be made out, one or two checks to be written; but she was not in the mood for the work. She was thinking of those people down yonder. What would happen to them? The way Jettison's wife had looked at her box of eggs! Hunger!

A faint sound disturbed her brooding. Some one had opened the gate in the garden wall. She threw the end of her cigarette into the grass, and sat listening. Footsteps. . . . She knelt on the sofa, her hands resting on the sill, and suddenly the empty window had a presence. Hattersley!

He stood staring at her, strangely wan and wild.

"Afraid I startled you. Had to come up and say I was sorry."

She remained kneeling, conscious of some crisis.

"Sorry?"

"For being such a swine."

How pitiful! And yet she was conscious of impatience. She resented having emotion thrust upon her. She was not ripe—might never be ripe—for such emotion.

"Oh, that's all right, Paul."

His face made her think of Gilda's description of him as a man peering through the bars of a dark cage.

"Quite all right, Paul. Come in and smoke. I'll light up."

Her calm, dispassionate voice sounded casual. And suddenly he was leaning through the window. He had hold of her hands. She felt him trembling.

"Can't—you—help me? I'm such a swine. Can't you?"

She felt dumb.

"Paul—"

"I'm muck, starved, sour muck. Dirt and failure. No hope. Oh, my dear, I'm a swine, and a bitter swine. If there's any sweetness in things, you—"

His white frenzy frightened her. She seemed to shrink. She felt inarticulate, the slave of a dreadful sincerity. She had nothing for him. He repelled her, save as a man who was pathetically deformed in his attitude to life.

"I'm so sorry. I—"

He looked at her.

"Ah, yes, sorry. I see. Vitriol, the vitriol of pity. I'm a damned fool."

He dropped her hands; the gesture was almost that of flinging something from him. He turned sidewise, stood for a second—and then with hunched, stark shoulders, fled.

She did not call after him. She knelt there feeling chilled, shivering. It was as though something in herself—her rather fastidious self—had been accosted, breathed upon. Poor devil! She closed the window.

She thought: "How dreadful! Two of us in a cave, the same cave. So—impossible! For that sort of thing, I should want sunlight. Poor devil!"

Chapter Four

FOR a man of forty-two, Mr. Richard Jekyll's getting up in the morning was a protracted business, almost the progress of a pantaloons. His man Santer brought Mr. Jekyll his early tea, China tea, at eight o'clock, with two pieces of very thin bread and butter. Mr. Jekyll wore on his head at night a black silk cap to preserve his hair from kinks and twists. At eight-thirty Santer came in to massage Mr. Jekyll's abdominal muscles. At eight-forty-five Mr. Jekyll had his hot bath and shaved himself. His skin was particularly sensitive; and after shaving, he dabbed it with an astringent lotion and then applied cream. He used a new toothbrush every fortnight. It was part of his ritual to examine his throat and tongue in a mirror. His throat, like his skin, was excessively sensitive. At nine-fifteen Santer brought his master his bottle of medicine and a wineglass on a silver salver. The mixture had to be taken exactly fifteen minutes before meals three times a day.

"I told Smith to bring the car round at ten-thirty, sir. Is that right?"

"Quite, Santer."

"Shall I put your medicine in, sir?"

"Certainly."

At nine-thirty Mr. Jekyll breakfasted on grapefruit, a little fish, thin toast and coffee. He ate very slowly, and read the *Times*. He was tall and dark and pale, with a slight stoop, and an air of intellectual irritability. No one would have supposed that he had been an Oxford rowing Blue, and that but for a large income and too much leisure, he might have been exceedingly healthy and active. His doctor was cynically assured that Jekyll would live to be eighty. He took such damned care of himself.

On this day in May, Mr. Jekyll was being driven down in his Rolls into Sussex to look at an estate. London was becoming impossible. Mr. Jekyll was unable either to sleep or to work, though he slept much more soundly than he allowed. He was engaged in writing a history of modern philosophy, and most unphilosophically so. He damned and cursed the noise.

Valetudinarian and virtuoso, Mr. Jekyll also wrote poetry, and dabbled in water-colors, and possessed perhaps the finest collections of old silver and miniatures in England. He had inherited an estate in Northamptonshire, considerable house property in North London, and some two hundred thousand pounds invested in first-class securities. He had sold the Northamptonshire estate. Who wanted to live among beefy idiots who could talk about nothing but shootin' and 'untin'? Northamptonshire was such a sodden country. It gave him rheumatism. It was so agricultural and slimy, and could be left to dress itself with basic slag.

The Jekyll car reached Westling about twelve-thirty,



JEKYLL

and pulled up to inquire the way to Bluewater. Richard Jekyll had heard of Bluewater, and had dismissed it from his mind as one of those fungoid growths that were springing up over a country that was decaying. He had been assured that though the estate he was about to view had been part of the Bluewater property, it was very much aloof and unspoiled, and well away from any high road.

Jekyll's first glimpse of Bluewater was from the top of the hill where the road dipped into the valley. He saw it as a number of white-walled red-roofed buildings on the edge of the sea. There was something almost Mediterranean about it. The creator of Bluewater had possessed a feeling for architectural pose. He had not just spilled bungalows and shops on the edge of the sea. Jekyll had expected to find the place a kind of glorified allotment littered with shanties, beach huts, and little tea-shops. It was not so bad as that, though its relative inoffensiveness was of no importance.

Miss Nuthall saw a splendid car stop outside the real-estate office. This was indeed quite a dramatic event. She put her small nose close to one of her windows. She saw Mr. Gerald Maggs rush out to receive the owner of the car. Mr. Maggs had been in a state of perpetual motion all morning. He was looking particularly bright and debonair. He had received a wire from town.

MR. JEKYLL WILL CALL TO VIEW
MOOR HALL DURING THE DAY. SUPRE-
PREMELY IMPORTANT.

Mr. Maggs did not wait for the chauffeur. He opened the near door.

"Mr. Jekyll, sir?"

"Yes."

"I had been notified. I am at your service, sir. Would you prefer to—"

Mr. Jekyll looked at the car clock.

"Anywhere I can get lunch?"

"At the Golden Anchor, sir. Excellent place. No doubt you would prefer to lunch first."

Mr. Jekyll extracted a glass and his medicine-bottle from a pigeonhole, measured himself out a dose and drank it. He put the bottle and glass away, while Mr. Maggs waited, interestedly respectful.

"Yes—I'll lunch. Suppose you join me at two o'clock."

"Certainly, sir."

The car moved on; and Mr. Maggs, after closing the door of the office, bolted by a back way across the grass between the banks of furze in the direction of the Golden Anchor. Actually, he ran.

STOUT was being stood a gin and bitters by one of his golfing guests. The ward-room was a male room, half cocktail bar, half lounge, where men were permitted to tell stories; but in these days it was as much feminine as masculine.

Maggs poked his head round the door.

"Excuse me—may I have a word, Mr. Stout?"

"What's the sensation, Gerald?"

"The chap who has come to look at Moor Hall is going to lunch here. He's a Rolls. Very important. He had a dose of medicine out of a bottle."

Stout laughed.

"That sort of chap. A patriarch."

"Oh, no—quite youngish. Dyspeptic, I suppose. I want to create a good impression."

Again Stout laughed.

"Well, I won't poison him. I get you, Gerald."

Stout found Mr. Jekyll in the front lounge looking at some water-colors on the walls—Jettison products which Stout exposed discreetly for sale.

"Rather nice, sir?"

Mr. Jekyll turned austere and looked at Stout though he rather objected to being addressed by a stranger.

"Quite. Local artist?"

"Jettison. You know his work, perhaps?"

Mr. Jekyll prevaricated.

"Slightly."

Archie Stout became urbane.

"I'm the proprietor. I understand you are lunching here, sir. If you care to order anything particular—"

Jekyll passed a hand gently over his waistcoat as though the inner man had to be surveyed and explored. "Thank you. Could you give me a little fish?"

"Sole, sir?"

"Yes—not too much oil. And perhaps some cold chicken, and a simple salad. But no tomatoes, no cucumber."

"Any sweet?"

"No sweet, thank you."

"And to drink, sir?"

"I don't drink with meals. I might finish with a little old brandy."

"Fine, sir."

Jekyll glanced at him approvingly. The fat fellow in the sweater was not wholly unenlightened.

A white house of two stories, long and rather low, a house of battered whiteness, a terrace, a balustraded wall, a tangle of ilexes and laurels; the gorse hills and the sea below, the sky above. Young Maggs, seated beside Mr. Jekyll in the car, had made bright conversation. He had presumed to warn Mr. Jekyll that the house was a little out of repair, and the gardens neglected. Both house and garden had remained virginal since Mr. Mallison's death.

Mr. Jekyll had been unaccountably silent. This young man chattered too much like some officious cicerone.

"Some fine timber, sir."

"How much land?"

"The park covers about sixty acres, sir."

Mr. Jekyll had said with some abruptness: "The keys. I prefer to be by myself, when I look at a new place."

He stood back and looked at the place, and the stoop seemed to come out of his shoulders. The slated roof was sunk behind a parapet in which were bays filled with balustrading. The upper windows were low and broad. In the center a generous doorway with pillars in the jambs, and a fine fanlight above it, gave access to the terrace. At either end French windows balanced each other. The proportions of the house were perfect. It stood there with a kind of serenity, and behind and clasping its wings were the dark ilexes, the laurels, the yews and cedars.

Richard Jekyll's face had taken on a slight color. His love of beauty was perhaps the one live thing that was left in him, and a quality that was not drugged by irritable ennui.

He walked along the terrace to a little belvedere that was half smothered by the ilexes. He stood there looking down over the gorse and grass to a valley enclosed between high woods and the white walls and red-brown roofs of Bluewater. It was most strangely unoffending, unexpectedly right.

He thought: "It might be a bit of Provence. A few cypresses, and more weather on those pantiles— This Mallison fellow was no fool."

He entered the house. It pleased him instantly, all the more so because it was faded and secret; but the sun came full upon the floors. There were two quite noble rooms below, between a hall paneled with painted pine and paved with square black-and-white tiles. The moldings were exquisite. The staircase was a simple but spacious affair with a mahogany rail and the plain banisters of the period. The windows had shutters. Upstairs he found a long corridor running from east to west, with a dome-light over the stair well. He opened doors and wandered in and out of rooms. One room on the west pleased him particularly.

He thought: "I could sleep here."

Throwing up one of the windows of this room, and leaning out, he discovered the agent's representative below sitting on one of the terrace seats and smoking a surreptitious cigarette.

"What about light and water?"

Gerald Maggs jumped up, hiding the cigarette in the hollow of a hand.

"Company's light and water, sir."

Jekyll looked at the view.

"Own sanitation, sir. Quite up to date. Mr. Mallison put it in. Septic tank, and everything."

"No airdrome near here?"

"Oh, no sir. And the continental services pass well the east. Really a most peaceful spot."

"No rights-of-way through the park?"

"No sir."

"I'll look at the garden."

The gardens were almost as good as the house. Mallison had set up one or two statues and a fountain. The statues were white against a backing of yews. There were walls and hedges of hornbeam, yew, box, secret places, little alleys and round points. Mallison had left well alone. Mr. Jekyll looked for—and did not find—the atrocity a rock garden. He found a cistern with lilies and goldfish, and a beautiful stone seat recessed between two cypresses, and an Italian gateway that was blue with the distant blue of the sea.

He returned to the terrace, and Mr. Maggs saw something strange in his face.

"I'll take the place. I'm much obliged to you for the courtesy you have shown me."

Mr. Maggs wanted to throw up his hands. He said: "I assure you—it has been a pleasure, sir."

Gerald Maggs' elation was such that he had to run around telling people. He had been promised a commission if he could persuade a purchaser to take Moor Place off the hands of the trustee—the house and some hundred acres of land, in all.

He dashed across to Miss Nuthall.

"Believe I've sold Moor Place."

The Squirrel made a little grimace like some one trying to repress a sneeze.

"Really! How splendid! That does sound brighter, doesn't it? The gentleman in the Rolls?"

"Yes—Mr. Jekyll. Lots of money. Just a little eccentric, perhaps; but a gentleman."

He made haste to inform Archie Stout.

"Your lunch must have agreed with him, Mr. Stout. He says he's going to buy."

"Solid business?"

"Absolutely. Told me I could notify the London office and left me the name of his solicitors."

He hurried back to the office, got his motor bicycle out of its shed, and careered off to Westling. He dispatched a telegram from Westling post office:

MR. JEKYLL A BUYER, MOOR PLACE. SOME PERSUASION. INSTRUCTED TO NOTIFY YOU—IMMEDIATELY.

The telegram allowed itself a little swagger. H. Gerald Maggs, had sold a house and a hundred acres, these days when no one bought anything larger than a desirable residence. The price was eight thousand pounds. Would Mr. Jekyll pay that, or would he haggle? After all it was an upset price; and his commission on eight thousand pounds! Mr. Maggs went and bought himself a new and highly colored pull-over, and fifty cigarettes, and a copy of the *Autocar*. This piece of business might be the first breath of a boom. There were a hundred plots of Bluewater waiting to be disposed of. Spring was here.

WORKMEN began to arrive; they were lodged in Westling, and conveyed daily to Moor Place in a lorry.

Messrs. Garrods were concentrating on the west wing and the kitchen quarters. Men were busy decorating both within and without. Mr. Jekyll proposed to inhabit the west wing, while Messrs. Garrods were moving east. As a matter of fact, Messrs. Garrods' men did not dislike Mr. Jekyll. He commissioned Mr. Stout to send up cases of beer, and packets of cigarettes by the hundred.

No, Mr. Jekyll was not balmy, but a little eccentric, a bit of a surprise packet. He could handle a brush. Actually he took off his coat one morning and tried his hand at scumbling. He had ideas about color and how it should be used. He had given Messrs. Garrods a color-scheme for each room. The hall and stairs were old-gold and blue; the dining-room buff and blue, the drawing-room white and apple green and mauve, the bedrooms amber scumbled faintly with purple. All outside woodwork was a mottled robin's-egg blue. As a matter of fact, the work being done was of excellent quality, and Mr. Jekyll said so. He allowed it be known that if the job was finished by June 21st he would pay every man a bonus. Yes, he was a bit



HATTERSLEY

a card, a gent who couldn't stand interference. Take him the right way, though, and he was a bit of all right. . . . Something annoyed Richard Jekyll.

Two butter-headed young women with brazen faces, and two fat young men in the latest style of stocked pull-over, had arrived in two sports-cars for the week-end. They were very loud, very dramatic, though Mr. Jekyll would not have minded had they confined their loudness and their laughter to Cocktail Corner. It was the time of the full moon, and about ten P.M., and Mr. Jekyll was beginning to feel sleepy over a novel, when the four young things embarked in a motorboat. Loud laughter and the sound of a ukulele. *Chug-chug-chug* went the engine. Jekyll was preparing to undress. He continued to undress. He could presume that if that aquatic motor-bike was going for a cruise, its detonations and dissipations would fade away along the coast. He got into bed, and switched off the reading-lamp. He waited for that hammering at the door of night's sweet silence to cease.

It did not cease. It diminished and returned, ebbed and flowed. The party had parked itself about fifty yards from the jetty. The ukulele played; voices sang.

Jekyll swore.

Five minutes to eleven.

Should he ring for Stout and request him to suppress that glee-party?

But how could he expect Stout to apply a gag to Blue-water Bay?

He turned out the light, and lay stiff and still.

There was a knot of rage in his tummy. He was familiar with those knots of foolish irritation. Why be irritated? The fools would come in and go to bed.

They were singing jazz-tunes.

They sang a variant of "Abide with Me."

Now and again the engine woke to life and chugged for a few seconds.

The ukulele played.

ABOUT a quarter past twelve the party did come ashore, noisily so. There were shouts, screams, giggles. Jekyll heard doors banging in a distant part of the hotel. But that knot in his tummy remained.

Nervous dyspepsia, free acid! He would suffer next day.

He fell asleep about two A.M., after four tablets of soda mint and half a glass of water.

When he awoke, his interior still felt corrugated. He had tea and toast and one thin slice of lean ham for breakfast.

Then he went round to the garage to get out the Bentley, and found a big scar on the off front mudguard. One of the sporty two-seaters had left its mark there, and the bright young things had pushed off without saying anything about it.

Jekyll backed the Bentley out into the yard. A scraped mudguard might be a trivial blemish, but it had not improved his temper. He revved up the engine. He too was making a good deal of noise; but it was his noise, and the hour was ten A.M. and not midnight. He put the Bentley savagely at the steep hill out of Bluewater.

"Get on with it, you—"

He swung into Stone Stile lane at forty-five. Stone Stile Lane, narrow and winding, demanded a modest five and twenty, but Mr. Jekyll was driving with a knot in his tummy. He prepared to take the Moor Place gateway at speed, though the stone wall made it blind. Just as he swung the nose of the Bentley round, the nose of another car emerged tentatively from the gateway. There was the sound of brakes being applied, of tires gripping and skidding. The confrontation was complete, radiator to radiator. The two cars came to rest in the gateway, almost affectionately so, face to face. Fragments of glass scattered themselves from the screen of the smaller machine. The Bentley's kiss had proved too passionate.

Jekyll got out quickly. The fault had been his, yes—completely and flagrantly his.

"I'm most awfully sorry. I—"

But some one else had a right to be angry. She had opened the side door of the van and climbed out, a dark girl in a red knitted cap and white linen coat. Her face was almost as white as the coat.

She said: "You damned fool!"

It was perhaps a unique experience for Mr. Jekyll. He looked at the girl's tense white face. No, thank heaven, the flying glass had not touched it.

"I agree, absolutely."

"That's not much good to me, is it? Crashing in through a gateway at thirty. Just—damned—silly!"

Mr. Jekyll's face was both contrite and whimsical.

"Absolutely so. My only excuse is that it is my gateway; and I presumed on my right of way. I accept all the blame. . . . I say—I do hope you are not hurt?"

"Not a bit."

"I was afraid—the glass might have cut your face or hands."

He looked at her with interest, contrition. The knot in his tummy seemed to have untied itself. She had called him a damned fool, and he had found the expression unexpectedly stimulating.

"A bad day for eggs, I think."

"Eggs?"

"I'd better look."

She went round to the back of the van, and opened the doors; and as she did so, three wooden boxes toppled over and fell on the road. She said: "Damn!" The interior of the van was somewhat chaotic. The neatly stacked boxes and bags were higgledy-piggledy. Mr. Jekyll had joined her. He looked still more contrite.

"Dear, dear!"

She seemed to resent the mildness of the exclamation. "Well, you hit me damned hard. I expect half the eggs are smashed."

"I shall pay—"

She withered him.

"Yes; but you have messed up my round and my customers. Half a week's supply. . . . Good Lord!"

A trickle of water had attracted her attention. It came from a large and spreading puddle under the radiator of the van.

"Look at that!"

Mr. Jekyll looked at it.

"You've holed my radiator. Nice mess! And look at my front axle! Can't you back your beastly car?"

Obediently, Mr. Jekyll got into the Bentley, started up the engine, and reversed into the lane. He maneuvered the Bentley close to the hedge, switched off, and returned to the van. For the moment he was not interested in any damage his own car might have suffered. The girl was looking at the front wheels of the van.

"Nice little buckle there—see?"

"Yes. I'm afraid—"

"A garage job. Means I shall have to be towed."

"If you will allow me, I will have everything put right."

She stood up straight and looked at him.

"Yes, that's all very nice. But I use a van every day. I have to live, you know."

"I'll provide you a van, hire one. The whole responsibility is mine. Meanwhile, would you mind telling me what you were doing in—my gateway?"

"What? Why, I sell eggs. I'd been up to the house—well, to tout for orders. The man Jekyll—"

"Quite so."

And suddenly she laughed.

"I suppose you are Mr. Jekyll."

"I am. Also—a damned fool."

HE liked her. He was certain he had never liked any one so quickly or so spontaneously before—he, most shrewd and self-sufficient of bachelors! He had been prejudiced against any sort of relationship that threatened permanency. Marriage was a messy and barbaric business; and as to mistresses—they could be the devil. . . . Strong white teeth, and a clear skin and laughter, and the scorn of her youth. What was Mr. Jekyll to her, Mr. Jekyll and his dyspepsia, and his so many thousand pounds a year?

He said: "I shall consider myself privileged if you will supply me—with eggs."

She was picking up the fallen egg-boxes.

"Thanks."

"And you will oblige me by booking the whole vanload to me."

"I'll charge you for the smashed ones."

"Thank you."

"Do you want to count them?"

"No, I'll leave it to you."

Then and there she proceeded to explore the breakages. The eggs in the padded boxes had not suffered unduly, but those in the paper bags were crackle and yellow pulp.

"Not so bad. If you hadn't holed my radiator, I might have managed."

Mr. Jekyll had an idea. He went and looked at the Bentley. One front wing was buckled, and the number-plate bent, and the paint had been scarred off a bumper; but the Bentley was little the worse. He returned to the lady.

"Look here, if we load the sound eggs into my car, I could drive you round."

She looked him straight in the eyes.

"Mean it?"

"Of course."

"I have to go to Bluewater, Westling and Saxbourne."

"Well, we could stop at Westling, couldn't we, and tell the garage people to collect your van. Where do you deal?"

"With Weyman's of Westling."

"Well, isn't my program logical? We'll push your van on to the grass there, and I'll help to transfer the cargo." She smiled.

"Rather a new sort of experience for a Bentley."

He returned her smile.

"And for me. I—rather like it."

"Well, let's get a move on."

That proved to be the day's small sensation so far as Bluewater was concerned—Mr. Richard Jekyll driving the egg-girl round in his red Bentley and delivering eggs! What was the esoteric meaning of the phenomenon? Had it any significance at all? Mr. Jekyll had the air of a man who was rather enjoying himself. He drove decently and discreetly, because of the eggs in the back seat and locker of the sportsman's coupé. Bluewater smiled at him kindly, with the exception of Paul Hattersley, who had strolled out in a dirty clay-stained blouse to meet Ann Jerrard.

He glared at Jekyll and his car.

"Didn't know you knew the fellow."

"I didn't till this morning. He smashed up my van, and offered to do the round for me."

"Damned parasite. No—no eggs."

Mr. Jekyll caught the word *parasite*. And to whom was that starved and revolutionary-looking person with the Russian hair applying the epithet? To him, Mr. Richard Jekyll? Surely not. But then, these artistic creatures often had inflamed mentalities. They were born to bitterness, lantern-faced fellows with insurgent hair and sallow faces, and eyes that beheld a universal woe.

Ann Jerrard returned to the Bentley.

"Fifty yards further on, please. The studio."

Jekyll drove on slowly.

"Who was that?"

"Just Mr. Hattersley, a friend of mine. A bit of a genius in his way. But being a genius doesn't produce—Bentleys."

Mr. Jekyll looked annoyed.

"Do you expect me to apologize for the Bentley?"

"I might."

ARCHIE STOUT came up to call; Jekyll had asked him to come up and see his miniatures and his furniture. He took Stout round the garden, and Stout saw that nothing had been altered.

"Wise man, sir. Do you know—I think I'd like a couple of little figures in those recesses."

"Yes, that's an idea."

"There's a man down at Bluewater who could make them for you. Besides, you would be doing a kindness."

"Oh, you mean the local bolshie, do you, Stout?"

"He looks much hairier than he is."

"Oh—by the way, I may want one or two little decorative panels for the hall. That chap Jettison—"

"Just the man."

Mr. Jekyll appeared to be in a tranquil and dreamy mood, and Archie Stout attempted to hint to him that Bluewater would welcome small favors.

"You'll excuse me, sir, but any money you could spend in Bluewater—would be well spent."

"Hard hit?"

"Damnably so—and damned plucky about it. One does what one can."

Jekyll looked kindly at Archie Stout.

"I'll bear it in mind. I wonder if Mr. Jettison would come up and see me."

"Of course."

"Could you tell him, or shall I drop him a line?"

"I think he would like a letter, or a visit."

"I take you. And Mr. Trotsky too?"

Stout looked grave.

"Paul's rather temperamental."

"Well, so am I."

Stout dropped in to see Jettison.

"Jimmy—I think a small commission is coming your way. Yes—Mr. Jekyll. He's writing. I suppose you'll meet him?"

Jimmy Jettison was excited.

"Ra-ther! I owe it to you, Archie."

"Fudge! Jekyll's not a bad sort. Rather opulently short-sighted."

STOUT called also to see Paul the Potter, but Hattersley was not so tractable.

"What! The fellow wants me to do something for him? He can go to hell."

"Don't be silly, old man."

"What's he want from me?"

"Two little figures—and, if you can manage it—sardonic silence."

"I'll ask him twenty guineas each for the figures. He'll kick. And so shall I."

"Perhaps not. He's not quite one of the rich because he's mean. My staff liked him. They ran about and did things for him."

"Bribed."

"No. When my people like a guest, I know he's not just gilded tripe. Jekyll's rather explosive, but he is a gentleman."

"The complete sahib! I know the sort. Well, he can come and see me, and if he can put up with my patronage, I'll confer a favor."

Stout smiled.

"You are a difficult devil."

"I was born crossways, Archie."

"By George, you were!" Stout agreed. . . .

Ann Jerrard, in a car that was doing duty for the damaged van, called at Moor Place twice a week. She parked her car in the stable yard, and carried her egg-boxes to the back door, partly because direct delivery to the kitchen quarter was more expeditious, partly because she was just a little shy of meeting Mr. Jekyll. But—why shyness? She who was so candid in confronting most situations drove quickly in and quickly out. She had no time to waste—upon what? The man Jekyll somehow provoked her, and made her feel quarrelsome and contrary.

And Mr. Jekyll was almost equally shy. He was paying for the hire of the temporary car; he was paying for the repairs to the van; he was paying Miss Jerrard for her eggs. His assumption was that they would meet again very soon, and yet somehow the coincidence was delayed.

"Very good eggs, Santer."

"Yes sir, real new laid."

"Tell cook I'd like to try some scrambled. By the way, how often do we get them?"

"The young woman calls twice a week, sir."

"Miss Jerrard hasn't got her van back yet?"

"No sir."

"What time does she call, Santer? I want to ask her about the car."

"Generally about half-past nine, sir."

Mr. Jekyll accused himself of being absurdly circuitous. Was he afraid that Santer would suspect that he was interested in Miss Jerrard? Was he interested in Miss Jerrard? Had not something rather poetical arrived upon paper about the Girl in the Red Cap? Mr. Jekyll breakfasted at nine; and at nine-thirty he was still breakfasting or smoking a cigarette and reading the morning paper.

Was he sufficiently interested to alter his rhythm? To alter one's rhythm, at the age of forty-two, is a serious matter. . . . A bricklayer and his mate from Westling were repairing the gap in the park wall in the shade of the beeches. Should not the work be inspected, and perhaps unexpectedly so? Richard Jekyll hurried that particular breakfast, and took his cigarette out into the park.

Ann was a little late that morning, and Jekyll had nearly reached the park gates when her temporary car appeared. He stood on the grass beside the drive, expecting her to stop, but she drove past him with a nod and a smile, and straight on to Moor Place.

Mr. Jekyll was piqued. Hang it, she might have had the courtesy to stop. Surely he was of sufficient signifi-

cance. . . . He forgot about the men at work on the gap in the park wall. He turned, and began to walk back to the house. He walked some fifty yards, and then paused. Would she career coolly past him on the return journey? No, he was damned if she should. He would stand in the middle of the road. He did.

She had to pull up. She confronted him with an air of brittle and dispassionate brightness, and he was even more attracted by the contrasts of her colors, red cap, black hair, white overall.

"Good morning."

He stood by the near side door.

"Car deputizing—properly?"

"Oh, quite."

"I just wanted to know."

She played with the gear lever as though the occasion were completely ephemeral.

"Did you notify your insurance people?"

"No."

"Why on earth not?"

"Well, really I think I forgot. Besides, it was my fault. One ought to pay for the privilege—"

He was challenged by her sudden glance. Almost it seemed to say: "Well, you are a silly ass. What do you pay a premium for?" She made him feel self-conscious, and not at all the cool autocrat, philosopher and man about town.

He said: "I think one ought to pay for being a silly ass. Don't you?"

She nodded, and put the car in gear.

"Certainly, if you feel like that."

Confound her! He blurted out even more fatuously:

"I like your eggs. Real fresh eggs."

Was he attempting freshness by way of eggs? She accelerated. "Thank you. Good morning."

And she drove off.

Chapter Five

JIMMY JETTISON had received Mr. Richard Jekyll's letter. It was a courteous and a gentlemanly letter, and it produced in Jimmy Jettison sudden optimism. He could be both the most sanguine and sorrowful of creatures; when he was pathetic, people were moved to stroke his head; and when he swaggered no one felt tempted to kick him. His wife had to read Mr. Jekyll's letter, and when it had been read in the studio, Jimmy toddled off to show it to Selma Dewhurst. He dropped in on Gilda and the Squirrel.

"Things are looking up!" he chortled. "I've got Mr. Jekyll interested!"

By the evening everybody in Bluewater knew that Mr. Jekyll was going to pay Jimmy Jettison fifty guineas for a pair of pictures, and quite small pictures, at that. In fact, Jimmy was so up in the air about it that he floated round Bluewater on his busy little legs, asking all his good friends to turn up at the studio that evening and celebrate the occasion. That was Jimmy all over, proposing to give people some of his money before he had put a brush to canvas; but Bluewater was kind to Jimmy. Bluewater did not sponge. It could wink and say: "Family, hold back."

To Stout, Mr. Jettison said: "Most awfully kind of you, old man. I shall be able to pay you what I owe you. Come round tonight. We're going to have a mild binge."

To Gilda, he said: "Bring the nymphs along with you. I'm going to get hold of Aubrey Benson and Derrek. We might cut across to the Sunflower and dance."

Hattersley received the news with an air of sardonic skepticism. Jimmy's stuff was terribly pretty-pretty.

"The chap seems able to chuck his money away. Did he write you a check on account?"

This was really too unkind and introvertish of Paul.

"The man's a gentleman."

"He's a bloody parasite. Can't do things for himself. Has to pay other people to do them for him."

Paul did not come to the party. He too had received a letter from Mr. Jekyll, and he wrote a reply, and went out and posted it at the pillar-box near the estate office.

"Mr. Hattersley presents his compliments to Mr. Jekyll,

and regrets that he is too busy at the moment to visit Moor Place. If Mr. Jekyll happens to be in Bluewater, perhaps he will do Mr. Hattersley the honor of calling on him and of inspecting certain figures that he has in stock."

Paul's tongue was very much in his cheek. The world was for Hattersley and Jekyll a place of pride and prejudice.

Meanwhile Derrek Fielden had been infected by Mr. Jettison's optimism. Was it not Bluewater's duty to proclaim that, "every day, in every way we are getting better and better?" It was time for the Sunflower to spread its petals. Had there not been seven cars in the car-park on Sunday? Six people had bathed from the Sunflower beach and consumed three sundaes, a lemonade and a cup of coffee. At Nankin, Selma Dewhurst had served five teas. Up with the flag, on with the dance!

Bluewater went about breathing the mysterious word, "August." It was not the secret breath of some conspiracy, but a symbol, an affirmation of hope and of faith. "In August, we shall really be busy. The holidays—yes, the boom will arrive in August. Last August was a washout—like the weather. And perhaps if we have a fine September—" Bluewater did not dare to let itself think of the winter. . . .

Dark pines, a steep hill, the full moon coming up out of the sea. Ann would have said that the blackness of the sea contained a tinge of blue. The moon's path across the water met Bluewater's crescent of pale sand just where the steps of the Sunflower went down to the waves. Was it an omen? But who believed in omens? Yet were they not more convincing than all that mathematical mess which science keeps in its

refrigerator, and which the next generation may deposit in dustbins? She thought of Derrek's red head. She might be sorry for Derrek, and sorry for Paul, but not so sorry that she could play the succoring priestess of sex to them. But what sort of man would she— Well, never mind. Everybody had to live by selling things—eggs, tram-tickets, labor, service. The only person she could think of at the moment who did not live by selling things was Mr. Jekyll.

She crossed the sand-hills to the Sunflower by a little path that was pale in the moonlight. The Sunflower phonograph was at full blast. She sat down in one of the loggias and changed her shoes. Through the glass doors she could see the dancers, Archie Stout and Gilda, Derrek and Gwen, Jimmy and Selma Dewhurst, and two or three couples from the Anchor. June Jettison and Maisie were dancing together. Jimmy Jettison's dancing always amused her. His little legs appeared to be mere busy appendages; he floated round attached to the bosom of his partner, seraphically smiling.

She went in. She was wearing a red evening coat, and her shoes were red. Derrek saw her at once. He abandoned Gwen in midocean, and sailed across. She always smiled at Derrek, because Derrek's wanting her was like Paul's, too serious.

She danced with Derrek. She enjoyed it, for dancing with Derrek was about as good as dancing could be. Yet if she could loosen herself to the rhythm, that was her limit. Sex had become so much more easy, and so much more difficult. No contract need be contemplated; but she was made, somehow, for the making of contracts. An easy evening among the sand-hills? She had more than an idea that such affairs were neither easy nor satisfying. Was she cold? Yes, and no. She had had to fight for her freedom and for her living. She believed that the things that mattered had to be fought for.

THEY were still dancing when she left. The Anchor people, thoroughly warmed, were calling for encores. Casually, she prevented any interference. "Got to be up early. Carry on." She sat down in the loggia to change her shoes, and while she was buttoning a strap, she became conscious of a presence.

"Hallo! You?"

He was sitting on the loggia wall, close to one of the white pillars, and he sat rather like a half-filled sack.

"Been enjoying yourself?"

"I have."



DERREK

"Flirting with that young fool Derrek."

She stood up. Oh, damn men and their passions and jealousies! Silly, chaotic creatures. She was angry. She might suffer Paul's insolence—to a point; but there were limits.

"Playing at Peeping Tom, what? Nose to the window-pane. Much better have come in and danced."

She heard him make a noise that was almost a snarl. She walked down the steps. He followed her.

"Sorry, my dear."

"You're a savage. Because Jimmy has a piece of luck, and we behave like a few kids—"

"Yes, I heard all about the fifty pieces of gold."

"And—fifty pieces of silver, to be correct."

"Damned exploiter of—"

"What?"

"Other men's hands and brains."

She walked fast and straight, and her words flicked back at him.

"Think so? If he offered you—"

"He did. Told him—politely—to go to hell."

She was angry.

"Idiot! You're always talking Shaw, and Shaw lives on the people who do things and pay him."

"This swine does nothing."

"He has manners, anyway. Take a commission, my lad, and pay me for eggs. I'm not always feeling the pulse of my secret and silly soul."

She had put the car away in the far coach-house, and bolted and locked the green doors, one of which had to be lifted slightly to clear the bricks. The moon floated above the tops of the four firs, and the shadows of the trees made an island of blackness in the middle of the pond. She paused for a moment at the gate. Everything was black and silver, save one white rose and the light in Sarah's window. Sarah's curtains were red, and between them Ann saw a triangle of yellow light and an apaque object that was a head.

"That you, miss?"

"Yes."

"A gentleman called, miss."

"Oh?"

"Mr. Jekyll."

"What time?"

"About half-past nine."

"What for?"

"He didn't say, miss."

"Leave any message?"

"No."

Mr. Jekyll calling on her unencouraged at half-past nine! Damned cheek! She wondered why she had not met him in Stone Stile Lane on her way to Bluewater, and then she remembered that there was a field path, and that it crossed two of the Moor Place fields. He must have come up that path.

What had been the urge? Had her book of desire become a trilogy of Derrek, Paul, Richard? But Moor Place wandering to the Four Firs across the fields by moonlight on a summer evening!

Chapter Six

SUMMER weather, a dubious and drenched July that appeared to tire of wickedness and cyclonic disturbances, and settled itself to sit serenely in the sun.

Mr. Jekyll was getting up at preposterous hours to go and bathe. Since he owned half a mile of cliff and foreshore, and a private path that led down to the sea over the green bluffs, Mr. Jekyll could bathe how and as he pleased. Almost he had become Bluewater in the conscious unself-consciousness of costume and color. He sauntered out in pajamas and a dark green and gold silk dressing-gown, with a towel over his shoulders. His piece of beach, screened by two small headlands, was so much his that he bathed in a state of nature.

Santer was surprised. Adapting his attitude to service on the assumption that it was good for him to know all that was to be known about his master, he observed and

reflected. Mr. Jekyll's medicine-bottle stood untouching in one of the little side cupboards of the Hepplewhite board. Mr. Jekyll's medicine cupboard in the bath appeared to have gone out of fashion. Mr. Jekyll was eating bacon and eggs for breakfast.

Sussex was calling on Moor Place and leaving cards.

Mr. Jekyll was returning cards of his own.

He had given orders to Spray and Twig for the Moor Place grass court to be restored.

Mr. Jekyll was being elected a vice-president of half a dozen cricket and football clubs by enterprising committees who had never seen his face. The Westling Scouts, the Conservative Club, the Young Peoples League, the Saxbourne General Hospital, and the incumbent three different churches were all inviting financial assistance. Mr. Jekyll was careless about these letters. Santer could recover and read them from the waste-paper basket. Mr. Jekyll even left his check-book loose in a drawer.

Santer satisfied himself from the couple of foils that Mr. Jekyll was subscribing generously to all these social shows.

"Well," thought Santer, "that isn't much credit to him. He can damned well do it."

Gilda Merriman would have said that Richard Jekyll was still very much a cave-dweller. It might be a highly cultured esthetic cave, supplied with every modern convenience, but it was still a cave. With the exception of Hattersley, Bluewater ceased from cave-dwelling. As a community it had escaped from false modesty, snobbery and a sense of shame. The conditions were too intimate. Everybody knew just how much or how little everybody was worth. No one swanked, for no one had anything singular to swank about. It was a little world of improvisations.

secret sufferings, but Bluewater did much laughing and found laughter inevitable. It ran about on the sands, wore any old clothes, and bathed, and occasionally played very bad tennis with very old balls on one of the Bluewater hard courts. It cherished a compassion and courtesy of its own, and its scheme of make-believe included a refreshing candor.

It still whispered the mystic word, "August," but with confidence so. July had been so disappointing.

Gilda, carefully dusting some of the old china in one of her bottle-glass windows, saw Mr. Jekyll pass by. To the world, he was so much Mr. Jekyll. Would he ever be Jekyll? He was wearing a tailor-made gray flannel and a Leander tie and a Panama hat. He had a check of twenty-five guineas in his pocket. Santer had seen the stub of that check: "Jettison. £26.5.0."

Mrs. Merriman stood in her doorway and saw Mr. Jekyll enter the studio. She was sufficiently large-hearted to hope that Mr. Jekyll would approve of the Jettison pictures. That which was cultured play to Mr. Jekyll, bread and meat to Bluewater.

Jimmy was at work on one of the panels. The table was a mess of paint-tubes, brushes, bits of rag and sundries; but Jimmy loved it like that. He got up nimbly from his stool, and with his palette held rather like a shield, smiled disarmingly at his visitor.

"Delighted, sir. I had thought of asking you to come and criticize."

He watched Mr. Jekyll's face as that gentleman examined the picture.

"Still very much in the rough, you know."

Jekyll wanted to be pleased. He was pleased. He said:

"You have got the idea—exactly."

Jettison's smile was pathetic in its relief.

"I'm so—pleased. You see—"

"Your contrasts of color are so bold—and yet so right."

Jimmy blushed. He saw Mr. Jekyll's hand go into his pocket and produce something white. Mr. Jekyll took the folded check under an old lacquer box that contained just three cigarettes.

"You'll excuse me. A foible of mine. Half your fault on account. You don't mind?"

As if James Jettison would object! Had he not been compelled to pawn his watch in order to procure paper for these particular pictures? He became very animated.



"We're just going to have tea. Do stay and have tea?"
"I'd love to."

He liked the Jettisons; and if his liking for them contained a protective kindness, his psychology told him that he liked the Jettisons because he could patronize them.

It did occur to him when he strolled out on the sand-hills that the Jettisons were people who could not ring bells. By conviction and temperament he was a Tory, and had he been placed on an island with a hundred rabid social reformers, he would have resisted reformation and remained the autocrat. He stood and looked at the sea. It was a Mr. Jekyll sea, and part of his personal concept of creation according to Jekyll. He might approve of the sea—"You are looking very blue today." Or he might calmly reprove it, and suggest that it was gray and depressing. In his attitude to the happenings about him he was very like Canute, a Canute who really believed the nice things less wealthy people said—to his face.

But what about that fellow Hattersley, and his impertinently polite letter? Why shouldn't he stroll in and look at what that uncouth and rather objectionable person had to show him? The idea of paying Hattersley for something rather piqued him.

He came back from the sand-hills, crossed the road and took the path to Paul the Potter's. How unwise of the fellow to have his shop off the public way! A huckster ought to know his wares. But was it a pose, and did Hattersley, like a bear in a barrel, make his very bearishness persuasive? The fellow posed as an oddity, a rude sage in a tub.

He pushed upon Hattersley's derelict gate. Probably the fellow was as poor as a rat. Well, common sense and philosophy would suggest that he should sell things and with some pretence of politeness. The place had an air of disheveled aloofness. Mr. Jekyll saw an old dinner-bell on a box in the loggia. He rang it and waited.

HE heard footsteps. Hattersley, in a filthy garment that could be described as a blouse, stood dourly in the doorway.

"Yes?"

"My name's Jekyll."

Hattersley was uncouthly and willfully silent. His face was ironic.

"I thought I might drop in and look at any figures you have."

"Oh, quite. Any idea of what you want?"

"Presumably so."

"Most people haven't. All right—have a look around. As a matter of fact—I'm busy."

He turned and walked through the cottage to his workshop; and Mr. Jekyll—a little less Mr. Jekyll and more man—followed him. He was nettled. Confound the fellow! But he would take his dignity into the potting-shed, and let it function there.

Hattersley was at work on one of Archie Stout's vases. He sat down on an upturned box at his bench and went on with his work. He was applying decorative details to a pot. Jekyll watched him for a moment.

"What's that you are using? Clay?"

"No. Faked stone."

"Is it frost-proof?"

"I shouldn't use it if it weren't."

This was helpful. Surly brute! Jekyll moved round the workshop, looking at the exhibits on the shelves. There were a few figures, Pans, a satyr, a horrible, obese and smirking baby, a naked girl poised as though about to dive, a dog scratching itself. The things were clever, devilish clever, but unpleasant. To Mr. Jekyll they were almost as unpleasant as Hattersley.

He said: "I don't think there is anything here that would quite suit me."

Hattersley did not turn his head.

"No, there wouldn't be. Do you know what you want?"

"Certainly."

"Then, why the devil don't you go and make it—yourself, instead of wasting my time?"

He glared over a shoulder.

"The idea is—paying the fellow who can sweat himself to do what you can't. Reality—what! Even a fungus grows. If you don't like my stuff, get out."

Jekyll walked out of the workshop. There was one thing that he wanted to do; kick Hattersley and kick him hard. Insolent brute!

Yet as he passed through the gate, he heard an inward voice remarking: "After all, you do buy everything. You never make anything, or even administer anything."

Chapter Seven

ON the following morning, instead of pottering about after breakfast with the daily paper and a cigarette, Mr. Jekyll sat down at his desk in one of the library windows. The manuscript and notes of his History of Modern Philosophy lay before him. The manuscript was meticulously neat, with an occasional note in the margin. Moreover, the desk was as neat as the manuscript, with every article and gadget that Mr. Jekyll might need ready to his hand. Mr. Jekyll kept two stylographic pens, and Santer was expected to see that one of them was always charged with ink. Mr. Jekyll hated to have his train of thought broken while he got up and messed about with an ink-bottle.

Mr. Jekyll knew why he had returned to his desk and his manuscript. Had not that rounder Hattersley accused him of being a fellow who could use neither head nor hands, a mere rich and idle virtuoso? But this was work, a labor of the intellect; and when the book was published, fellows in dirty smocks like that potter chap—

Santer opened the door. He had a letter on a silver salver.

"What the hell do you want? Haven't I made it plain that I'm not to be disturbed?"

"Very sorry, sir. A letter."

"Well, it could have waited. Who's it from?"

"Miss Jerrard left it."

Mr. Jekyll stood up.

"Bring it here. Any answer?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Wait. Don't go running away."

He read:

"Dear Sir,"—Confound it, why dear sir?—"Weyman's sent me the bill for the hire of the temporary car. I have paid it. You may like to have the receipt."

"Yours faithfully,
A. Jerrard."

Mr. Jekyll was intensely annoyed.

"Idiots! Miss Jerrard still here, Santer?"

"No sir."

"Damn! Tell Smith to bring the Bentley round at once. No, I sha'n't want him."

Mr. Jekyll went to the telephone, and Santer slid away, but paused in a doorway to listen.

"Who's that? Mr. Weyman. Good. This is Mr. Jekyll of Moor Place. Why the blazes don't you attend to business and carry out the instructions that are given you? . . . What? You sent a bill in to Miss Jerrard. . . . Yes. I've seen the receipt. . . . What? Office error. Don't try to fob me off. Understand—that I am withdrawing my custom. Yes. Good morning."

Mr. Jekyll went in pursuit of Miss Jerrard. He was still in a state of irritation, eager to explain to her that he had not been guilty of eluding his obligations, and that he had told Weyman's of Westling tersely and tempestuously what he thought of them.

He hustled the Bentley down to Bluewater, but Miss Jerrard's van was not in Bluewater. He drove to Westling, and parking his car in Church Place, explored the High Street. He even asked a police constable on point duty whether he had seen a blue van. The officer looked at him tolerantly.

"Half a dozen, sir."

MR. JEKYLL felt he was behaving a bit ridiculously. He could not explain to this ironic young constable that his quest was the quest of Miss Jerrard, a dark young woman who wore a red cap, and a white overall. He was not behaving very intelligently. His logical course shaped itself for the Four Firs and Miss Jerrard's farm. He drove to the Four Firs.

He left the Bentley in the lane outside the white farm gate, and as he passed under the tall firs, a sea breeze moved them, and the nearest tree seemed to make with one flat outstretched bough a mystical gesture over Mr. Jekyll's head. A benediction or a spell? Four white ducks were swimming in the pond. They watched the man with beady black eyes, and the man did not notice

them. He was approaching the gate of his reincarnation as Jekyll, mere man. He walked up the path of Eve's garden to the green door under the white porch. He stood a moment looking at this farmstead garden with its phloxes and bergamot and helenium. He saw its color against the stone wall, the summer sky above it.

Mr. Jekyll crossed the yard. He saw a cartway and a field gate between a barn and a stone building. He passed through the gate into the field, and saw the wire runs and the brown houses. A youth was cutting the rough grass and weeds in one of the runs with a sickle.

"Miss Jerrard anywhere about?"

The youth straightened and stared at him.

"She's in one of the houses."

Mr. Jekyll was almost jocular.

"Which particular cage do I enter?"

The youth pointed.

"That one—there."

Mr. Jekyll was accustomed to being addressed as sir, but rural Sussex had never been noted for its social polish. He entered the wire enclosure, and forgetting to close the gate, walked toward the chicken-house. The turf had a worn sour look. A flutter of white birds fled from him in quite unnecessary alarm; and suddenly he saw Miss Jerrard's white coat in the doorway of the house.

He raised his hat.

"Good morning. I hope you won't—"

She cut his salutation short.

"Do you mind shutting the gate? Quick! If those birds get out, it will take me hours—"

"I'm so sorry."

BUT his contrition was deliberate and dignified; it did not rush instantly to cut off the escape of the run's inmates, and with an air of almost casual scorn she swept past him and reached the gate before the little agitated mob of hens could escape from it. She came back.

"I should have had them half over Sussex."

She was head in air, unfriendly. This was a futile idiot who left gates open, and whose dignity was dressed in the products of other people's labor. Mr. Jekyll looked slightly flushed. This curt, handsome, casual young woman roused in him a most peculiar turbulence. She was like wind and flame and ice, hot sunlight and snow, queer, elemental urges.

"Can you spare me a minute?"

"Oh, yes."

"I came up to apologize—"

"Oh, about that bill. I paid the thing. That's finished."

He became slightly heated.

"Absolutely—no. Those fools at the garage ought never to have sent you that bill. I have given them a dressing-down."

She smiled faintly, ironically.

"I thought you or your secretary had forgotten."

"I don't keep a secretary."

"I thought all rich men kept secretaries, mental valets to help dress—"

Really, she was being excessively rude to him.

"I had not forgotten. I will let you have a check—"

"Oh, don't bother."

"But my dear Miss Jerrard, I insist."

She looked at him. She smiled, and the quality of her smile provoked him. It was as though he and she belonged to different worlds, and his world roused in her a combative contempt. He was not quite a man, according to her standards. He talked cultured, gentlemanly tosh. He had no grip of the realities. And perhaps he exasperated her all the more because she was attracted by certain physical qualities in him.

She said: "I shouldn't, if I were you."

Now, what exactly did she mean? That she was a better man than he was, and that if he tried to cut capers on his wooden horse—

"Very well. But I am excessively—"

"Distressed?"

Damn it, was she mocking him? He was conscious of a hardening of his vitals, and of a sense of crude heat and anger at the back of his head.

He said: "May I suggest that I did not come up here to—"

"Oh, that's all right."

"It isn't all right. There is something I want to take up with you. I can be frank on occasion. At my age—"

She laughed, and he was furious.

"You're not, really, so very old, are you?"

"That's neither here nor there, Miss Jerrard. You seem to think that man of my—"

"Standing?"

He went white.

"Why not say—sitting, Miss Jerrard?"

"Yes, it might be more applicable."

He regained control. He became exceedingly dignified.

"Is your prejudice personal—or social?"

"Isn't that rather personal?"

"I shall be very glad if you will answer my question."

She looked him in the face and smiled.

"Is it necessary? Why are we brawling? Come and look at this house. It's quite worth looking into."

She led the way, and he followed her. Had she brushed his attack aside with the rather amused smile of one who felt herself to be the better man? Confound the cool insolence of her youth! He found himself standing beside her and looking down the length of the wooden building. It contained some hundreds of White Leghorns, on the perches, in the nesting-boxes, on the floor covered with litter. The brilliant whiteness of the birds was set off by their red combs. They seemed to move and flutter like hundreds of white leaves.

Jekyll stood and stared. It had never occurred to him that the interior of a chicken-house could be beautiful.

She said: "When they all come down together, it's almost like a snowstorm. And they keep me busy."

He glanced at her face. It seemed less hard. When she answered his question, without words and in some more subtle language?

"How many men do you keep?"

"One man and a lad. I'm the man. You see, I belong to a generation that has passed a sponge over a slate."

"You are referring to the past?"

"Not exactly the past, but a smudge of humbug, a false sentiment and silly make-believe."

"You mean that you don't believe—"

With that clean, cool smile of hers, she took him up. "Oh, don't I! I believe in all sorts of things, in doing things, especially for yourself. Here's this old world of ours threatening to go to pieces. We can't sit and fiddle and scribble verses. One has to get busy about something."

She bent down, and with a swift, deft movement caught one of the birds, and holding it skillfully, felt its body. The hen did not struggle.

"All sorts of useful things to learn, even in a hut like this. You get posed by problems. I have to tackle them for myself. I can't—"

She refrained. With a sweep of the arm she sent a white bird sailing. Mr. Jekyll's face was rather like the face of a man who had been out on a frosty morning.

"Was—*delegate*—the word you had in mind?"

"As a matter of fact, it was."

SHE turned and walked out of the house, and he followed her.

"I wish you would let me settle that bill."

He caught a glimpse of her profile. It was so easy for him to settle bills she was evidently thinking. He had only to get out a check-book.

"Supposing you pay me—in kind?"

"How do you suggest?"

She laughed.

"I might put you to work, Mr. Jekyll; but then, you get your hands blistered. I'm rather short of fruit. Believe the Moor Place orchard—"

"What sort of fruit?"

"Plums. Apples. Have you any?"

He felt foolish.

"I really don't know. I'll see. If there is any fruit—"

"Oh, you can't pick apples just yet. Plums, yes. Sarah wants to bottle and make jam."

He answered her quite meekly:

"I'll see about the fruit. I expect you are busy."

She looked him in the face.

"Yes; but I like it, you know." . . .

Jekyll drove at a steady pace back to Moor Hall.

He went straight to the house and searched for a basket; but such articles were unknown in the Jekyll half of Moor Place. He had to ring for Santer.

"Sorry, Santer, but I want a basket."
"A basket, sir. What sort of basket?"
"Something for fruit."

Santer went in search of a basket, but there was nothing to be found in the staff quarters of a size that appeared suitable to Santer. There were two clothes-baskets, and a greengrocer's "round," but Mr. Jekyll had asked for a basket, and a basket there would have to be. Cook was persuaded to loan Mr. Jekyll the basket which went shopping in the secondhand saloon car.

After tea he got out the Bentley, and placing the market-basket on the back seat of the coupé he drove to the Four Firs. Ann was away up the field; and Sarah, answering the bell, found Mr. Jekyll and the basket of plums on the doorstep.

"Will you please tell Miss Jerrard I left these," he said.

"Miss Jerrard's up the field, sir."

"Oh, don't call her; I know she's busy."

"Do you want the basket, sir?"

"Yes, perhaps I had better take it back."

The plums were transferred to the Four Firs' clothes-basket, and Mr. Jekyll went his way; but when Ann was shown that mass of purple fruit, she smiled.

She thought: "I bet he didn't pick them himself."

But she was wrong. There were undivined possibilities in Mr. Jekyll.

Chapter Eight

HATTERSLEY was in one of his bitter moods.

He was recovering from one of his headaches, and these periodic attacks of pain, instead of chastening him, made the soul of him like a raw wound. That ass Jettison had come to sit by his bed and cheer him up, and Jettison's chatter had been all about Mr. Jekyll's collection of miniatures.

"Wonderful, my dear chap, like a lot of gems. Cosways and Smarts."

Damn Jekyll and his miniatures! Why did not rich men help their contemporaries to live by purchasing their products, instead of collecting the creations of the dead? Hattersley sat on the edge of his bed, and his unshaved chin made his pallor all the more squalid. He felt giddy after these attacks. An empty and queasy stomach craves delicate meats; and at the moment he was living on raw onions, dry bread and tea. He had an onion-bed and a patch of potatoes in his piece of ground at the back of the cottage.

He pulled on a pair of gray flannel trousers. They were shapeless and stained, and foul from being worn day in, day out. In this hot weather he was conscious of their foulness. He was putting on his shirt when he heard some one ringing the old dinner-bell in the loggia.

Jettison had left the door open; and as Hattersley entered the front room from the back, another man entered it by the front door. They stood and looked at each other. The visitor smiled. He was a huge, blue-eyed, rosy-faced ex-inspector of police. He held something white in his right fist. Hattersley went on buttoning his braces.

"You, Kane, is it?"

"Sorry, sir. Have to do these things."

His red fist placed the document on the table.

"That's served, sir."

Hattersley emitted a little savage laugh.

"O. K., Kane. Who is it this time?"

"Mr. Rogers."

"The baker. Don't blame him. I'd pay the devil if I could. He's been pretty patient."

"You couldn't let me have the money, sir? It would save a lot of trouble."

"Absolutely. I've got twopence. If I could live on sand, Kane, I would."

The big man looked compassionately at the haggard scarecrow upon whom he had served the writ. There was a kind of smolder in Hattersley's eyes. Ex-Inspector Kane knew that look. He had seen it in the eyes of a murderer to whom life was still violent and red. Hattersley did not look quite sane.

"Any nice little billets for anybody else, Kane?"

"No sir, not today."

"Well, that's something. Wish I could offer you a drink I can't."

"I'll take it as drunk, sir."

"Yes, one can't even get drunk."

The big man turned on his large feet and walked toward the door. He had bicycled from Westling in the heat, and the homeward hills were mostly against him. He could get a drink at Mr. Stout's without having to pay for it and a pint of bitter would go down like silk.

He heard Hattersley's voice behind him, a harsh and strangely quiet voice.

"Do you ever think about the bloody show, Kane?"

Kane faced about.

"What show, sir?"

"Civilization—our social scheme. The swine and the husks, and the other swine. Doesn't that filthy, silly selfishness of it ever get you?"

Kane's eyes were like two blue marbles.

"What's thinking going to do to it, sir?"

"Blow the whole bloody show to pieces, Kane."

"Is that going to do me any good, sir, Kane?"

Hattersley threw back his disheveled head and laughed. His teeth, and the hollow of his throat, showed.

"No. . . . What do I care if it doesn't?"

I want to kill, Kane—kill, smash, shoot.

Kane looked at him pityingly.

"Won't do any good, sir. Got too much against you. Other people would—"

"I'd like to ask you a question, Kane."

"Well, sir?"

"If I ran amuck through Westling with a knife and red flag, I suppose you would be one of the first to put that big fist of yours in my face."

Kane did not smile. His red face was solemn.

"I should, sir. It's kinder to hit a man hard—when he's a danger—to himself and to everybody."

Hattersley's mouth looked twisted.

"Thank you, Kane. That's brutally honest of you!"

His bitterness took itself to the sea.

He heard laughter, and seeing the Wilmer girls and Fielden running across the sands, he got up and walked away in the direction of Culverin Cove. He was not fit to meet women in those filthy trousers of his.

What was he going to do about this writ? He owned money everywhere, rent, rates, bills. In the old days a man could assign himself to his chief creditor as a bonded slave. He was not eligible for the dole. He could not sponge upon neighbors who were not much better off than he was.

He walked as far as Spaniard's Point, and sat down on the turf close to the Martello tower. He could command miles of sand and of sea and of green hills. The evening had a golden lucidity, the sunlight touching things gently. He could see the empty white bathing-huts, and the figures on the Bluewater sands, and the smoke from Arch Stout's chimneys. The Anchor chef was preparing dinner for the Anchor guests—savory meats, delicacies. Ten motorboats were chugging toward the Anchor jetty like white shuttles spinning foam for the blue fabric of the sea. A red motorcar came down the hill and pulled up outside the inn.

Prosperous people. He supposed that were he to walk into the Anchor dining-room in these filthy trousers and shirt, and a two-days' beard on him, even Archie Stout would protest. Could he blame Stout? Men in dinner jackets and women in fancy frocks! Damn it, what did it matter? Those prosperous people could not see the red light on the hills. The volcano was about to erupt. Civilization was devouring itself. Millions of unemployed and a few rich men fiddling. Bluewater was but a symbol of a world that was bankrupt, while gathering round itself the desperate shreds of a shabby illusion.

THEN bitterness became anger, anger that craved to vent itself violently upon some hated thing. What did it matter what the thing was, provided it typified society's smugness, the frustration and deprivations that the social scheme had compelled him to suffer? Beyond Spaniard's Point lay the Moor Place estate, with its foothills dipping to the sea. Mr. Jekyll's property. 4



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suddenly Hattersley's anger blazed up and focused itself upon the figure of Jekyll. Damned parasite, a fellow who lived on an inheritance, a chap who had never put his hands on his wits to work! A superfine swine who dawdled through life, called people by their surnames, or if he indulged them in a prefix, made of it a condescension.

He remembered that if he had been willing to kowtow to Jekyll, Jekyll might graciously have employed him, and with the proceeds of that patronage, a bread-bill might have been settled. But why should he, a craftsman and an artist, be expected to propitiate a fellow who was living on ancestral fat? Privileged parasites.

He got up and walked toward the Moor Place boundary. Jimmy Jettison's chatter was in his mind—Mr. Jekyll's collection of miniature paintings, Cosways and Smarts. And what was a collector but a fellow who could not create, and who tried to make himself singular by collaring the creations of other men? Yes, he was just like a critic, an inferior fellow who contrived to rehabilitate his self-regard by sitting in solemn judgment on his betters. Hattersley strode. Jekyll and his miniatures, and silver and glass and china! Worth thousands of pounds. A little museum sacred to cultured arrogance; and he—Hattersley—was living on onions and bread and weak tea.

He came suddenly upon a fence, a barbed-wire fence very new and glittering in the evening sunlight. Yes, that was the properties touch, putting barbed wire round things, fencing other fellows off. Damned swine! He forbade you to walk along these sea hills with their grass and gorse. Walls, fences, laws, notice-boards! Who the devil made the earth, land-jumpers like Jekyll?

Trespass? By God, yes, he was going to trespass. He was going to trample all over the Jekyll estate. He proceeded to insinuate himself between two of the wire strands, and in the process a barb caught his deplorable trousers and held them. He cursed and pushed through. The barb ripped the flannel so thoroughly that the skin was exposed. Another grievance, another prick of the barb, to the temper of a man who was a little mad.

Hattersley went straight up the hill. He climbed a gate and found himself in a grass field below the park. He could see the white house up above on his right, serenely sunning itself. Smoke rose from a chimney. Yes, in a little while Mr. Richard Jekyll would be dining, one man waited on by half a dozen servants. He stood for a moment, and gazed. Damn it, he would go where he pleased, walk in Mr. Jekyll's park and his garden, pick his fruit—yes, and look into his windows, if the spirit moved him, and the spirit was sardonic and angry and reckless. He hoped he would meet Jekyll. He hoped Jekyll would ask him what the devil he—Hattersley—was doing there.

He would tell the swine something.

Santer, going out to carry in Mr. Jekyll's deck-chair, two books, and copies of the *Nineteenth Century* and *Country Life*, was confronted by this scarecrow. It came coolly up the terrace steps and paused there, its hands in the pockets of its deplorable trousers.

Santer challenged it.

"Hallo! What do you want here?"

"Mr. Jekyll in?"

"No, he's not. What do you want here?"

"A little politeness, my lad. When does your master dine?"

Santer had not been in service for nothing. He became subtly and insolently polite.

"I beg your pardon, sir. I did not know anyone was expected to dinner."

"I'm not."

Santer appeared interested in Hattersley's trousers.

"So I see, sir. Any message, sir?"

"No."

"Very good, sir. Am I to say that—somebody—has called?"

"No, you can hold your damned tongue. I'm just looking round." He turned on his heel and wandered aimlessly away, insolence in his bearing. . . .

Jekyll had the setting sun behind him as he came across the park. He was passing through a group of beech trees with the grass beyond a pale gold under the

sunlight after a four weeks' drought. He saw Hattersley before Hattersley saw him, and he paused in his stride under the shadows of the beeches. Hattersley's figure was like an object seen in a ray of light, brilliantly illuminated—the black hair, the fallow face, the smudged chin, the mottled shirt that had once been blue, those filthy, less trousers. Hattersley was walking toward him, his hands in his pockets, and Jekyll waited.

What the devil was the fellow doing here?

Hattersley came on, straight toward the beech trees, though he knew Jekyll to be there; but it was plain to Jekyll that Hattersley had not sighted him. He had the air of a man who was not conscious of any other person's presence. Their confrontation was sheer coincidence.

Hattersley's figure had reached the shadows of the trees before Jekyll moved forward to meet it, and then it

that Hattersley became aware of Jekyll. He paused for a moment, head in a challenge and dark smirk on his face. His hands remained in his trouser pockets.

The clash was inevitable. It became inevitable when Hattersley moved forward again, and diverging slightly, made though to pass on Jekyll's left. His manner was insolent and ironic. He nodded to Jekyll. He was taking the air and pleasure in Mr. Jekyll's park; and it was plain to Jekyll that Hattersley had anything to say about it. And Mr. Jekyll had.

He walked forward and to the left, and their paths converged.

"Good evening. You were looking for me?"

Hattersley's eyes seemed to smolder. He did not stop.

"No," he replied. "Just taking a

exercise. Nice evening."

His insolence was deliberate and obvious; and Jekyll's jaw and lips stiffened.

"One moment, please. I suppose you know—"

"Private property."

"Quite so. I am aware that there are people who trespass on Mr. Hattersley's property."

"Yes, I'm one of those people."

"So, I'm to regard this as a kind of protest."

"You can regard it as you damned well please."

They stood within two yards of each other, looking each other's eyes.

"Thank you—that's frank. But as the law stands, Hattersley, I am allowed to request you to go elsewhere."

"You can. It won't make any difference."

"And if you refuse to go, I am permitted to use force as may be necessary to persuade you—gently—off my land."

In the shadows under the trees Hattersley's eyes shone like the red of the retina.

"Try it."

"I give you—warning."

He was aware of Hattersley trembling as though wind was blowing through his flimsy clothes.

"You—superfine swine! Do you think I would let you touch me? Look at that tree. Do you see the fungus on the roof? . . . Yes, I said fungus. You. You and your property—you who belong to the legion of swine—"

His face was like an evil, howling mask, and Jekyll's face was almost as ugly.

"Thank you. But I haven't abdicated yet. If you preach violence, you may find—"

"Go to hell."

"Are you—going?"

"No."

"I rather think you are."

IN its way it was quite as savage a dog-fight as a rough-and-ready community could have produced. Hattersley did not wait to be attacked. The wild was loose in him, and he charged. But he was not hurt by his wildness. As he came in, Jekyll hit him hard straight, and Hattersley went down.

He was up and rushing in with blood over his forehead and chin. There was more cunning in his savage charge than he ducked, bored in, and got his arms around Jekyll and threw him. For a moment he was on top in the air, on the ground. His rage and fury had surprised the



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man, but to Jekyll's anger was added a sudden nausea that was almost stronger than mere rage. Hattersley's bloody face was pressed against his jaw. He was aware of the stench of Hattersley's body and stale clothes. He was on his back, and being swarmed over by this other man. His nausea and his jostled dignity raged together.

THEY struggled for a moment like a couple of boys on a class-room floor. They rolled over twice, but Jekyll was too strong for the other man. He was on top, and mercilessly so. He got Hattersley by the throat. He pinned Hattersley's legs, and with his left hand fastened on Hattersley's throat, he heaved himself up. Hattersley's hands clawed at those choking fingers.

Jekyll struck savagely, and almost like a man who would go on striking forever. Hattersley's face seemed to fall away from him, slip back. It was all bloody and turgid. And suddenly Jekyll seemed to realize that the body under him was limp; it had ceased to struggle. The rage of the fighter went from him. He stood up, hands hanging, suddenly aware of the violent animal in himself. He looked at the object that was Hattersley, bloody and mauled and panting. He was conscious of sudden pity, a little whimper of shame.

Hattersley, in a kind of anguish, twisted over and lay prone. His shoulders heaved. The movement of his ribs showed beneath the wretched shirt.

Jekyll spoke.

"I say—I'm afraid I've hurt you. I'm sorry I lost my temper like—"

There was a kind of sobbing sound from the man on the grass.

"Look here, you'd better come in and let me—"

Hattersley writhed round and up. He supported himself on one arm. His bruised and bloody face was distorted. His breath came in jerks.

"Go to hell!"

"Look here, I'm sorry."

"Go to hell. I don't want any damned chivalry."

He struggled up and stood swaying.

"If I hadn't been half starved, I'd have licked you. . . . No, don't touch me, damn you."

"I'm not going to touch you, man."

Hattersley's head gave a kind of jerk. He steadied himself.

"You'd better not. Go in and have your bloody bath and your dinner, and so—good-day to you."

Jekyll watched him totter off among the beech trees. The legs in the deplorable trousers seemed to waver and hesitate. The faded shirt, torn open at the back, showed yellow, greasy skin. The fellow wasn't fit to make his own way home, but what could be done with so mad a dog? Jekyll stood and watched him. He even followed him a little way; but when Hattersley paused and looked back, he halted. He felt that he had never been hated as this man hated him with the hatred of humiliation.

He thought: "Better let him alone, I suppose."

But he stood watching until Hattersley had disappeared beyond the trees. The clash of their contrasts had been final.

Most certainly the primitive in Hattersley had dragged the formalist that was Mr. Jekyll out of his cave and into the light of day. A shocking affair, two highly educated men savaging each other like a couple of roughs in a slum! Jekyll made for the house. If he was conscious of having hurt the other man rather badly both in body and soul; he was also conscious of some personal disorder. His collar and tie were awry, and he had some of Hattersley's blood on him.

The unregenerate male in him should have exulted. It had exulted momentarily: "I've thrashed the fellow." It might have strutted and crowed and exhibited itself in its own farmyard as conquering chanticleer, but the man that was Jekyll did nothing of the sort. Actually, he sneaked into the house, and contriving to avoid all those who served him, he went upstairs and stripped and washed. He wanted to rid himself of the smell of Hattersley, of the shame of Hattersley; for somehow—the other fellow's shame was his.

He had suffered no damage but a bruise or two. His face was unmarked; but the gray flannel suit he had been wearing was stained and crumpled. One lapel had a mess of blood on it. He told himself that he could not wear that suit again; he would give it to Santer. But

that splodge of blood? Actually, he scrubbed it off with a nail-brush, realizing as he did so that nothing was so sure as that no man could conceal very much from his servant. But why conceal anything?

He left the suit lying on the bathroom chair, changed into a white shirt, black trousers, vest and necker-jacket. He looked at his face in a mirror. There was not a scratch on it, while the other man's face had been bloody and beastly. He had smashed the fellow rather brutally. And in Hattersley's case had he not smashed more than a face?

The gong rang, and he went downstairs. Santer was standing correctly behind the open door. He closed after his master, and was sufficiently quick to pull Mr. Jekyll's chair for him. With a flick of the hand he spread Mr. Jekyll's serviette, and presented it. No word was exchanged. Santer served the soup, and stood at attention by the sideboard.

"Have you any sherry, Santer?"

"Sherry—yes sir."

It was quite unusual for Mr. Jekyll to take sherry. It was liverish stuff, and did not suit him. Santer filled Mr. Jekyll's sherry glass. It was not for him to question.

"You'll excuse me, sir."

"Yes, Santer."

"I found a rather peculiar person hanging about the place. I thought—you might wish to know."

Jekyll sipped his sherry.

"Man in gray flannel trousers?"

"Yes sir."

"I met him in the park. Quite all right, Santer. He explained himself to me."

No more was said, and Mr. Jekyll's sleek head did not suggest that he had been engaged in a rough and tumble with that very person.

After dinner he took his coffee on the terrace. He walked up and down the terrace, and watched the landscape and Bluewater melt into the blue dusk that met itself with the sea.

He thought: "I'll go down tomorrow and apologize to the fellow. It's up to me to do the gentlemanly thing."

Chapter Nine

HATTERSLEY lay down in the bracken and was stiff and bruised; but this physical anguish was a skin-pain in comparison with the inward smart. He had been thrashed, and thrashed by the very man whom he so furiously wished to despise. And he had been aggressor. He had flown at the throat of his enemy, and been smashed, humbled.

He sat up among the fern fronds, and held his head between his hands. He shivered. His rage remained in it shivered in rags of futile shame. He could kill the fellow. Why shouldn't he kill him? He gnawed his nails, and he oozed on to them from a split lip. Jekyll had struck him with brutal blows. But would he have cared had the fellow been his, and Jekyll's face that which had been battered Swine!

He was so much the child of his generation, stuffed with all the *isms*, bitter and envious. Everything that was vile: the cunning scheming of sly old men, the necked exploiters, profiteers. Like some bright theorist frothing at the mouth with words, he had run out to challenge privilege and met a fist. Privilege floored him. And yet he did not ask himself whether might not be something at the back of privilege. He belonged to the environmental school. The heredity was class-fudge, dope. There were to be no strong or weak, or defects could be remedied by planting weak on the shoulders of the strong. Altruism should be enacted by the vote of a committee, and all the necked and masterful people be suppressed. He had tried to suppress Jekyll, and the attempt had been a failure.

He was still on Jekyll ground, and it was very beautiful ground. With the sun low in the west, the light from the tops of the trees and left the bracken in the shade. Its greenness seemed to take on a tinge of blue. The bleached grass of the park grew pale. Hattersley lay up. He knew that he did not wish to be seen in Blue. With his battered face and torn clothes. The shame smoldered in him. Making his way through a path

tion, he reached the stone wall of the park. Leaning against it, he felt the cold stone in contact with his skin.

He realized that his shirt was split down the back.

Well, why the devil should he care?

Why should he not show his wounds to Bluewater? This slinking was a moral cowardice, and yet another tribute to the man who had thrashed him. He scrambled over the wall into the lane. It was screened here by undergrowth, hazel and elm scrub, and the lane itself was hidden from him till he pushed through the foliage. He put an arm over his face and pushed through. He had not expected to see anyone in the lane, or perhaps he was too much alone with his own sore self to care.

But if the unexpectedness of his emergence from that green thicket surprised the other person, her presence was even more disastrous to him. She was less than ten yards away, and walking toward him. He saw her pause and stand still as he broke through into the open. It was too late for him to turn back. She had seen him, recognized him; and that which was Hattersley could not be hidden.

He was conscious of a chill in his vitals, a kind of cold shame. He was aware of himself walking toward her. He did not want to look into her face, but something within him made him look. He was a noisome object; she was shocked, repelled. And then her eyes avoided him.

"What on earth have you been doing?"

He did not answer her. He opened his mouth to answer her, but it remained a mute and bloody slit. He was conscious of jerking his head up and walking past her with the last of the sunlight on his face. The lane dipped down into darkness. He seemed to be walking into that darkness, shadows from which he would never emerge. His anguish was like a flame in his throat.

ANN JERRARD stood looking after him. She saw his ragged shirt. She had been alive to his sullen shame. How had he got into that state? What had he been doing in Moor Park, if he had been in Moor Park? She saw him disappear into the dark hollow of the lane.

She thought: "He looked like a man who had been fighting and taken a bad thrashing. How beastly!"

If there was any pity in her, repugnance qualified it. She was not touched emotionally by dirt and defeat. She had even known moments when she herself could have laid a lash across Hattersley. She disliked a man who snarled.

Hattersley did not go very far. The last shreds of a chafed pride seemed to snap; his shame was complete. Once more he wanted to hide himself. He sat down on a grass-bank under a ragged thorn-tree where the green glooms were turning gray. There was a coolness in the air here. Dew was falling, and he was glad of the cool, moist dusk, and of the silence. Something in him felt broken; it had ceased to struggle and rebel.

She had looked at him with eyes of disgust. Yes, probably he had appeared to her as a rather foul creature; but even if she had cared ever so little, her fastidiousness would have spared him a little pity. Pity? Her pity? Was he no better than a child who had been thrashed and ran whimpering to a woman? Her eyes would have said: "Don't touch me; don't come near. You are—horrible." He put his head down between his knees. He seemed to be sinking into a pit of self-abasement—frustration, injustice, poverty, circumstances which had made him rage. He was a failure, and all his raucous protests had been no more convincing than the screaming of some lout at the tail of a fool mob—the futility of words and of theories, of classroom self-consciousness, academic idealism!

You gabbled theory at life, and it smote you with a fist. How much dreadful rot he had talked! Modernism was a welter of sex and of socialism; and yet to the one woman whom he desired, he was worse than a sexless thing. She had no use for him. Man, driven and deceived by his urges, is ever seeking some formula which shall satisfy those urges. Balked, he tries to force some "ism" upon life, and dubs it an ideal, when the very core of his ideal is self. The prophet may be no more than a successful demagogue, the reformer an exploiter of his fellows—in disguise.

Hattersley was abandoned by everything, save his bitterness. That remained. It turned the knife against itself. He had lusted to cut the throat of the social scheme, and now his own throat felt the edge of the steel. Fool! His one and first adventure in violence had brought

him nothing but a thrashing, and distaste and scorn in the eyes of— Suddenly he hated himself, despised himself. And he hated that other man the more because he could no longer despise him. Jekyll had thrashed him.

It grew dark, and in the darkness under the thorn-tree he accepted his crown of thorns. The ultimate and inevitable impulse toward self-violence penetrated and possessed him. Crucifixion, and the hyssop on his lips! He abandoned himself to a bitterness that was imaginative and fantastic. Even in defeat he could not renounce his passion for a gesture. Yes, he would do the thing, and in that particular and ghastly way.

It became with him a fixed idea. He got to his feet and followed Stone Stile Lane till it joined the road to the sea. He paused at the top of the hill and looked down into Bluewater. Bluewater! The very name suggested the artist turned shopkeeper, livid posters, succulent young women inviting you with smiles to come and bathe in the sea. The commercial grin of the showman. He saw the lights of the Anchor Inn. Stout in his sweater and beret, Stout who ran Hotel Optimism! But Stout, or rather Stout's premises, could provide him with what he needed.

He went slowly down the hill. The estate office was shut up and dark, but there was a light in Squirrel Nut-hall's window. A wayward curiosity made him approach that window and look in. He saw Freda sitting on a stool, spectacles on nose, diligently crocheting. The world was full of such squirrels.

He saw Freda raise her head and glance in the direction of the window. Her spectacles glimmered. Had he made a noise, or had she divined a presence? He turned and fled. He took the path through the sand-hills. Miss Nuthall had put down her work and opened the door. She was sure that somebody had stopped at her window.

Her little face hung there for a moment. Then she closed the door and locked it, and drew the curtains. It was as though Death had stopped to look in at her window, and she had felt the chill of his presence.

Hattersley came down to the sea near those rocky hummocks which a fanciful Mallison had christened Pieces of Eight. There was a strip of sand, and he followed it eastward toward the jetty and the little harbor below the Anchor Inn. The Anchor Inn was closing its eyes. One by one the lights went out. People were going to bed. Two or three white boats lay drawn up out of the reach of the tide. Hattersley approached the first boat, leaned over the bow and groped. Yes, the thing he needed was there, coiled up, with one end fastened to a ring. His fingers fumbled fiercely at the knot. He had no knife on him, and he had to deal with that knot. The damned thing was hard and unyielding. He tore a finger-nail in his savage haste, but at last the knot gave to him. He looped the coil of rope over his left arm, and stood for a moment looking up at the windows of the inn. He counted the lighted ones. Seven. Abruptly one grew dark. Now—there were six. Absurdly he was reminded of an old nursery rhyme. "Seven little nigger boys—" He laughed. "So—the lights go out."

Carrying the rope, he went back the way he had come.

JEKYLL was shaving himself in the bathroom when Santer hurried up the stairs. The manservant knocked at the bathroom door.

"Excuse me, sir."

Mr. Jekyll did not like being interrupted when he was shaving, but the occasion was privileged. Two of the women were in hysterics. Smith had been a fool to come rushing in, blurring the news.

"What is it, Santer?"

"A man's hanged himself, sir."

"What?"

"A man's hanged himself on one of the cedar trees at the end of the drive."

Jekyll was washing the remains of the soap from his face. He appeared in the bathroom doorway, dabbing his chin with a towel.

"A man hanged? Here?"

"You can see—it—from the landing window, sir. Smith saw it first."

Jekyll was in his light blue and gold silk dressing-gown, and still drying his chin, he walked out onto the landing and looked out of the window. Santer had followed him, a strangely scared Santer. He had been down yonder and seen the dead man's face.

Jekyll stared. Pendant from a bough of one of the cedars opposite the house he saw a figure. The lower half of it was gray, the upper half a smudged and dirty white. Hattersley!

"Good God! Haven't you fools done anything? Run—get a ladder."

Jekyll was sweeping down the stairs in blue and gold, still grasping the towel. He was aware of Santer's voice trailing after him. "The man's dead, sir. You can see he is dead." Good God, what a sardonic finale! The fellow had hanged himself in view of his vanquisher's door!

Jekyll found himself in the graveled space between the grass and cedars and the white house. He crossed it with his eyes fixed on the hanging figure. It turned slowly from side to side like a joint on a spit. Also it rose and fell a few inches as though the rope were a rubber cord, for a wind was stirring the boughs of the cedar. The tree had been easy to climb, for it was branched nearly to the ground. Hattersley must have crawled along that bough, fastened the rope and let himself drop.

"Good God!"

He stood on the edge of the grass, looking up. The thing was about twelve feet above him. He could see the worn places on the old brown shoes. . . . Hattersley's tongue was hanging out, and his face was horrible.

Jekyll heard Santer's voice behind him.

"It's the same person, sir, I saw—"

"Yes, the same."

"Nice sort of thing to do—in a gentleman's garden! What could have made him?"

Jekyll turned abruptly, and his face was terrifying. "Shut up! Don't stand there talking. Get a ladder."

"But he's dead, sir."

"Get a ladder."

It was Jekyll himself who went up the ladder in his blue and gold dressing-gown and cut the dead thing down.

Chapter Ten

THERE are occasions when a man may exclaim, "What a damned nuisance!" or, "What a tragedy!" That which was Mr. Jekyll might have given utterance to the first; that which was Jekyll became involved in the second.

He telephoned personally to the Westling police-station. He had given orders to Santer.

"I'm going to Bluewater. Send the Bentley round."

"Your breakfast, sir?"

"Just bring in some coffee."

Archie Stout was lighting a pipe on the Anchor terrace above the sea wall when Jekyll's car drew in. Much of the Anchor was still breakfasting, and the porter was polishing the glass of the loggia screens.

"Mr. Stout in?"

"I think he's out on the sea-wall, sir. I'll tell him."

"Don't bother. I'll go out."

He saw Stout's white-sweatered figure flexed over the wall. Stout was in conversation with some one below—Tom Swaine, his handy-man, who was both boatman and garage-attendant. The voice of the fair-haired Swaine seemed to come up from the sea.

"Some one's taken the rope out of Vic and Bert, sir."

"What!"

"Some one's pinched the rope."

"The dirty dogs."

"Been scrounged to tie up one of those week-end chasiss, no doubt. Lot of sneak-thieves. Mr. Fielden says they've pinched some of his chairs."

"Cut and left, Swainie?"

"No sir—unlashed from ring."

"Well, the fellow can't have been in a hurry."

Jekyll had heard this conversation as he came down the steps of the loggia to the sea-wall. So—that probably was where the poor devil had got his rope, not to lash up a back-axle, but to swing off a man! Stout, hearing steps behind him, turned with a rolling movement of his large body against the wall. He removed his bulldog pipe.

"Good morning, sir. Swaine was just telling me some bounder has had the bad taste to rob Victoria Albert of a coil of rope."

"I think I know where your rope went, Mr. Stout. Stout stared. Evidently to Mr. Jekyll there was nothing facetious or funny in the incident. Stout would have described his expression as one of concentrated fierceness.

"Curious—that you should know, sir."

"Hattersley hanged himself last night."

"What!"

"Yes, on one of my trees."

"Good God! But—why—"

"I'll tell you. Let's walk to the end of the wall."

They were away from the world at the end of the sea-wall, and had they looked down from it they might have seen Hattersley's footprints in the sand. Wind rained and the next high tide would erase them. Jekyll brought out a cigarette, lit it; it was the day's first cigarette. He threw the match over the wall, and looked seaward, began with a question.

"Were things—pretty bad—with Hattersley?"

Stout, his round and jolly face looking the more shocked and serious because of its roundness, bit hard at his pipe. He shut his mouth to speak.

"Pretty damnably so."

But why was Mr. Jekyll looking so fierce? He had the air of a man who had some clash had roused too suddenly from sleep, and who had come out from a pleasantly darkened room into the glare of reality.

"I wish—I had understood. Poor Hattersley must have been desperate—and gave him the last push."

"You, sir?"

"It happened like this: He was seen wandering outside my house. I met him in the park. . . . Frankly, Stout, Hattersley and I—were not *sympatico*."

"He was a difficult creature."

"I asked him what he was doing on my land. I received a flood of abuse. I ordered him off. And with any warning, he attacked me. Yes, we had a pretty age scuffle. . . . I was stronger than he was. I'm afraid I knocked him about rather badly."

Stout tapped his teeth with the mouthpiece of his pipe. He was considerably astonished.

"But really, sir, just because—"

"I was coming down this morning to apologize. My idea seems rather futile after the event. I knocked the poor devil about—just when he must have been blind with breaking with bitterness. . . . He hanged himself outside my house. His last protest! If one had realized—"

Stout shrugged.

"One can't always tell what's going on inside some one's fellow. Poor Paul was a bit of a fanatic. But what?"

"He's lying in my garage. I have notified the police. I came down here, Stout, because—somehow—I felt coming to tell you. Oughtn't we to go to Hattersley's place before the official world starts rummaging? I want to do anything that can be done."

Stout looked at him kindly.

"I think I'm with you, sir. When the official world starts messing about—pawing everything—"

"Exactly."

"What about walking over to the place?"

"Yes—I want to get down to meet the police. The inspector is coming over from Westling."

On the terrace and in the loggia men and women were lighting pipes and cigarettes, gossiping, and exploring morning papers. It was a plus-four, be-brogued, worn, sun-tanned, well-fed crowd. One or two of the men had Stout as he passed: "Morning, Archie. Greens won quite so fast today. . . . There's been a dew."

STOUT and Jekyll took the path past the coast-guard station. Gwen and Maisie were putting out some Gilda's merchandise in the forecourt—Windsor chairs or two lead figures, Italian jars, garden ornaments. Stout waved to Stout: "Had a wash in the sea, Archie. I didn't see you." Stout waved in return, but produced



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back-chat. They followed the road and crossed the grass to Hattersley's cottage. The door stood open. The shadows of the loggia pillars were sharply outlined on the gray-tiled floor.

The first thing that attracted Stout's attention was that writ left lying on the table. He picked it up, glanced at it and passed it to Jekyll.

"Last straw, I suppose."

Jekyll had never seen such a document before. Writs did not run in his world.

"What is it?"

"A writ. May I look at it again? Thanks. . . . Oh, yes, one of the local bakers whose patience had failed. I don't blame him."

To Jekyll, the idea was almost fantastic, that a man should be driven to despair by a bill for bread. He looked round the room. It contained one chair and a table, and two or three empty boxes. Stout had replaced the writ on the table.

"Better leave it there—to stimulate the official mind. Yes, two years ago this room was quite—it—according to Chelsea. Hattersley had a nice taste in Persian rugs and pottery."

"Sold?"

"Yes, bit by bit. Mallison let these people down rather badly. Of course, a man can't help getting killed."

Stout went through into the bedroom, and Jekyll followed as far as the doorway. The bed was unmade, the enameled basin full of soapy water. There was nothing in the room but the bed, one chair, a table made out of a deal box, and a small oak bureau.

Stout lowered the flap of the bureau, disclosing pigeonholes, some of which were stuffed with papers. He examined them.

"Bills, receipts. Nothing personal."

The drawers contained old notebooks, some underlinen, socks, a shirt or two, a suit of pajamas, and one tweed suit. There were no letters. Hattersley had not hoarded letters, or perhaps he had had no letters to hoard.

"Pretty pathetic. Not a letter. Not much need for us to—intervene."

They explored the small kitchen. It contained a dirty oil-stove, a few plates, cups, and so on, and a small meat-safe. Stout opened the door of a safe, and saw two onions and a quarter of a loaf of very dry bread.

He closed the safe. "Explicit!" he said tersely.

"Hattersley was—starving?"

Stout nodded.

"Down to bedrock and stale bread."

Jekyll's face had lost its fierceness.

"Rather terrible, Stout. It's almost impossible to realize, that—in a place like this—"

"Yes, I didn't know it was quite as bad. Poor devil!"

Said Jekyll: "No wonder he called me a fat swine."

They were out in the sun again, Jekyll walking rather rapidly away from that cottage.

"If you'll excuse me, Stout, I'll get back."

"Right, sir. I think I ought to break the news. Let me know, if—"

"Yes, I'll keep in touch with you."

Jekyll walked on, and Stout diverged toward Ye Olde Shoppe. Gilda was standing there in the sunlight between an Italian vase and a little lead cherub on a stone pedestal.

"Something to tell you, Gilda. Where are the kids?"

"Inside."

Stout lowered his voice.

"Paul hanged himself—last night. . . . Yes, my dear, he couldn't get out of his cave."

Jekyll found the Westling inspector of police waiting for him, a solid genial person in a gray suit and a soft hat. Jekyll took the inspector into the library and offered him a cigar. If he had expected to discover the officer somewhat swollen with authority, he was relieved to find him so quiet and considerate. The man had kind eyes.

"I'll give you all the information I can, Inspector. It's rather a grim affair."

"Thank you, sir."

"There will be an inquest?"

"Of course, sir."

Jekyll frowned slightly. He would be a witness, and a witness it would be his duty to make a kind of personal confession, and describe how he had given a desperate man the last push into eternity. Not very pleasant. But had he not spent the greater part of his life in trying to avoid unpleasant things, boring circumstances and boring people, ugliness and noise and shabby makeshifts? Rather cowardly. He was not going to be cowardly.

"I'm afraid, Inspector, I was—in a way—responsible. Apparently Mr. Hattersley had had worries."

"Debts, sir?"

"Yes."

"To you?"

"Oh, no. It happened like this: I found Mr. Hattersley wandering about my place. I tackled him—as a trespasser. Well—he attacked me. It is quite plain to me now that he was not quite sane. He got me down on the ground. . . . Well—lost my temper. I knocked him about—rather roughly. I'm sorry. If I had known—"

The inspector watched Jekyll's face.

"You did not damage him seriously, sir?"

"Oh, no. He must have walked back to Bluewater, taken a rope from one of Mr. Stout's boats, and come back here, and hanged himself on that tree during the night. A pretty grim retort, Inspector."

"The man couldn't have been sane, sir. Jekyll smiled faintly.

"What is sanity? Oh, well, we won't—"

"How do you know about the rope, sir?"

"I've been down to Bluewater. I found quite by chance, that Mr. Stout had missed a rope—"

The inspector made notes, holding the notebook on stout knee.

"About what time did you fall in with the dead man, sir?"

"About seven, I should say. Just before I went in for change for dinner."

"He doesn't seem to have marked you, sir."

"No, nothing to speak of."

"And you changed and dined?"

"Yes."

"So you didn't think it was very serious?"

"I thought we had made a couple of fools of ourselves. I was going down this morning to apologize."

"Did anyone else see Mr. Hattersley, sir?"

"Yes, my butler-valet, Santer. He found Hattersley wandering round the house. That was sometime before I met him."

"And what did your man think, sir?"

"Oh—that Mr. Hattersley was queer."

The inspector put away his notebook.

"I'll see Santer. By the way, sir, you don't want—t—body—here?"

"No."

"I'll send an ambulance to take it to the Westling mortuary. I expect the inquest will be held at the Crow."

"Anything more I can do, sir?"

"I don't think so, Inspector."

"I'm going down to Bluewater. I'll take the rope with me, and make sure that it came from Mr. Stout's. I shall have to inspect Mr. Hattersley's—place."

He rose, and Jekyll shook hands with him, a gesture which was unexpected.

"If I can help you in any way—"

"I'm much obliged, sir. You've been frank with me. I think it's quite obvious that—the man wasn't sane. A easy case for the coroner's jury. I suppose you don't know whether Mr. Hattersley had any relatives?"

"I know nothing. I had only met him once or twice and casually."

"May I use your telephone, sir?"

"Of course."

When the inspector had gone, Jekyll went out on the terrace and walked up and down. He was consumed with a strange restlessness. He wanted to do something, and there was nothing to be done. He was haunted by a de face, distorted and hideous, and by the shabby and starved squalor of the place in which Hattersley had lived. The business was so final, so damnably final! The blindness



GILDA

of the blows he had struck! If he had known! But wasn't it a part of man's business to know when some poor human beast was in pain?

And he had been fiddling his days away writing a History of Philosophy. How ironical!

ANN'S first call that morning was at Bluewater. She free-wheeled down the lower half of Bluewater hill, knowing by experience that the impetus would take her van past the estate office and Miss Nuthall's shop, and just as far as Gilda Merriman's. She and Bluewater were in accord, in that they were thinking of Paul Hattersley; but Ann was thinking of him as a live man, Bluewater as a dead one. The tragedy had done more than cast a gloom over the place: it had frightened Bluewater; it was like the first death after the coming of a pestilence.

Ann got down, opened the doors of her van, and took out an egg-box. As she turned toward Ye Olde Shoppe, she saw Gilda coming out, a Gilda who was unexpectedly without a smile.

"Your usual dozen, Mrs. Merriman?"

"Please."

"May I leave the box here? I'm just going across to Paul's."

She was aware of Gilda's looking at her rather queerly. Everybody knew that poor Hattersley had been—in his own morose and inverted fashion—rather fiercely attracted by Miss Jerrard. So, she hadn't heard?

"Paul's not there."

"Oh."

"We are all most frightfully shocked about it. He committed suicide—last night."

Ann stood holding the egg-box. Like Jekyll's, her face seemed to grow fierce, as though some one had hit her and hurt her.

"Good Lord!"

She glanced toward Hattersley's place, and Gilda saw that she did not care as Hattersley might have hoped she would have cared.

"How?"

"He hanged himself. No, not in there. On a tree outside Moor Place."

Ann's eyes came sharply back to Gilda's face.

"Outside Moor Place! But—"

"He and Jekyll had had a row. Poor Paul must have been more or less mad. Some one left a writ on him. He was found wandering in Moor Park."

"By Mr. Jekyll?"

"Yes. Apparently Jekyll asked him what he was doing there, and he just flew at Jekyll."

"Was Mr. Jekyll hurt?"

"Not a bit. He appears to have thrashed the poor creature."

The fierceness had gone from Ann's face, just as it had melted from Jekyll's. She looked shocked, distressed.

"That explains it. You see—I saw Paul last night. It must have been just after— Yes, in Stone Stile Lane. He came bursting out of some undergrowth. . . . My dear, I might have—"

"You—"

"Oh, yes. I spoke to him. He looked rather—horrible. I said: 'What on earth have you been doing?' Yes, just that. The sort of silly, callous thing one does say. He bolted past me. I suppose I must have looked rather—callous. You see—"

Mrs. Merriman seemed to breathe deeply.

"Reactions—one can't help. He came down and got a rope from one of Archie's boats. . . . Well, that's enough, I think. Archie tells me that Jekyll is badly cut up about it."

"Really?"

"Well, wouldn't he be?"

"I rather thought he was so well padded— But how beastly of me! In a way, I'm even more responsible than he was."

"My dear, who could have foreseen—"

"If I had been even a little decent to him, the thing—"

Mrs. Merriman shook her head.

"I don't think—anything—would have stopped Paul. Unless, of course—but that wasn't humanly possible."

Ann looked at her.

"No. I couldn't help it. I didn't like him."

Well, what was the use of make-believe? She was not a young woman who indulged in personal confessions; but

to Gilda, you said things that you would not have said to other people. She left Mrs. Merriman her eggs, closed the doors of the van and drove on. She pulled up again outside the studio, and with a sudden veering of impulse, she got out, and turned back and across the rough grass in the direction of Hattersley's cottage. She could not define her impulse; she did not attempt to define it. She walked up the garden path and across the little loggia, and straight in through the open doorway.

Two men were examining the contents of Hattersley's bureau. She had not expected this. She stood hesitant. The men looked at her. One of them, the elder of the two, had a sheaf of bills in a big hand.

"Yes, miss?"

She understood what was happening. The official world was turning over the dead man's effects, searching for elucidations of the tragedy.

She felt rather embarrassed, but she did not show it.

"Excuse me—are you the police?"

"Yes, miss."

"Perhaps I ought to tell you that I must have been the last person to see—Mr. Hattersley alive. He passed me in Stone Stile Lane last night."

"About what time, miss?"

"Oh, about—a quarter to eight."

"Did anything—in his appearance—"

She nodded.

"I spoke to him, but he did not speak to me. He rushed past me."

"Did you say anything to him?"

"Yes. I asked him what he had been doing. He looked as though he had been fighting."

"And he just bolted past you, miss?"

"Yes."

"Did he look queer?"

She frowned, and stood looking at those papers in the inspector's hand.

"Yes—what one would call desperate, I suppose."

She escaped after the big man had jotted down some details in his notebook. She returned to the studio. She found both the Jettisons there, Jimmy sitting on a chair and stroking the dog, his wife sewing away at something. It would seem that the studio had taken the tragedy as a personal affair. It was greatly shocked and upset, as though part of the organism that was Bluewater had ceased to function. Mr. Jettison was incapable of working. His wife sewed because she had become accustomed, when life was particularly devastating, to seek solace in simple movements.

"My dear, isn't it—horrible!"

Ann deposited a bag of eggs on the table.

"It should never have happened."

Jettison struck out his legs, and Slump slid to the floor. His child's eyes were round and protesting.

"So easy to say that. A social—crime. I mean—people shouldn't allow— It might have happened to any of us. Not you, of course—"

His wife looked at him like a mother.

"Poor Paul was so much alone."

"Exactly."

Jimmy's face became emotional.

"He hadn't anyone like you, June. Nothing to sweeten things and keep him—sane. That's the real tragedy of it. But then of course, he wasn't the sort of creature a woman—can—"

Ann, suddenly shy of further intimacies, excused herself and escaped.

SHE had eggs to leave at Selma Dewhurst's, and Selma came out to meet her. Stout had been heard to say that anyone who ran a hotel or a tea-shop should be either an oleaginous cynic or a secret humorist, perhaps both. Selma Dewhurst was neither. She was one of those women with a Roman nose, a high color, and blue eyes flecked with specks of amber pigment, combative, intense. She would be eager to mend the tail of the world's ragged shirt, not because she had any deep affection for frayed humanity, but probably because her suprarenal glands were very active bodies.

"Heard the news, I suppose?"

Ann nodded.

"That man Jekyll ought to be—buried alive. A cowardly outrage—"

"But—Hattersley attacked him."

"My dear, Paul was just a poor passionate child. If Jekyll had had any humanity or understanding—"

"I don't know. I think Paul was a little mad. When a lunatic suddenly goes for you—"

She realized that she was defending Jekyll, and she became self-conscious and cold.

"Well, my opinion is that the man Jekyll is really a murderer. Rubbing salt into a wound, driving a poor creature to despair!"

Ann became casual.

"Do you want these eggs? I'll put them down to you. Isn't it rather easy to sit in judgment on people?"

That was the only way to deal with Selma when Selma's comb was red, and she was in a clucking mood. Ann left Miss Dewhurst holding the egg-box; and getting out of earshot as quickly as possible, she started up her engine. On the return journey she pulled up outside the Sign of the Squirrel. Miss Nuthall came to her doorway, looking as though she had seen a ghost.

"Oh, my dear, isn't it terrible! Some one came to my window last night. I feel sure it was Paul. If only I had let him in!"

Her hands and her eyelids flickered.

"Like a bird beating its wings, you know, in the darkness. Yes—I am sure it was Paul."

Ann drove on up the hill thinking of Hattersley as a bewildered and desperate bird flapping its wings at a window. Yes, she had shut her own casement against him. She was just as responsible as Jekyll.

Chapter Eleven

A BROAD passage, brick-paved, and walled with white plaster and old oak, and ending in sunlight. Hats and coats on pegs, a smell of beer and of food and of large moist bodies; two farmers arguing noisily, a shabby little woman in black sitting on an oak bench, Inspector Drew standing beside her with his peaked cap in his hand. Other people crowding and talking.

Jekyll's eyes met the inspector's. Mr. Jekyll had something to say to him. They drew aside under an old brass lantern with their heads close together.

"Not much in the way of resources, Inspector?"

They glanced at the woman in black.

"No sir. The lady tells me—"

"I want to be responsible for—all the expenses—burying poor Hattersley. Could you arrange it?"

"I could, sir."

"I'd be grateful if you would. All bills to me."

The inspector did not say that it was very generous of Mr. Jekyll, for could the quality of generosity be associated with putting a man in his coffin?

"I'll arrange it, sir."

"I want a few words with the sister."

He walked along the passage to where Hattersley's sister was sitting. When he spoke to her, she raised her face as though adjusting a surface to receive some physical impression, but her expression did not change. Her face had a lifelessness, a smooth apathy as though worry itself had ceased to affect it.

"One can't express one's regret, Miss Hattersley. Had I understood the situation better—I believe the verdict was both rational and humane—"

He felt that he was talking to a stone face. Its lips moved.

"Paul was always eccentric."

He hastened to complete his confession.

"One ought to have been wise as to that. I want you to let me save you any expense—in this matter. I have asked Inspector Drew to arrange everything and send any accounts to me."

Her pale eyes gazed at him unwinkingly. Did she understand?

"Very good of you, I'm sure."

"It is the least one can do."

He shook hands with her, and her hand was cold and bony. With a sense of relief he walked down the passage and into the sunlight of the Crown yard. Drawn up in front of his red Bentley, he saw Miss Jerrard's blue van. She was standing beside it as though waiting for some one. He observed her. She stood there just as she had stood when giving her evidence, calmly, with a kind of dispassionate candor. She had been an admirable witness.

He thought: "I've seen her angry; but otherwise—the surface has been so perfectly intact. A beautiful virgin with no oil in her lamp? I wonder."

HE crossed over to her van. Bluewater was grouped round Stout and his two-seater—Gilda, the Jettisons, Miss Nuthall. They were putting poor Hattersley and his tragedy to sleep, and discussing the case of the sister. Stout had offered her a bedroom, but she had insisted on returning to London; she ran a small boarding-house in Bloomsbury.

"Do you mind my saying something?"

Apparently Ann had been unaware of him as Jekyll. She turned her head, and looked him straight in the face.

"There is not much to say, is there?"

"Only, that I admired the way you gave your evidence."

"Could I have done—otherwise?"

"Some people might not have been so—so explicit."

"Doesn't that apply to you?"

"You mean I was not sufficiently—"

"No. You said everything that could be said."

She had turned her face again to the group centered round Archie Stout. He studied her profile, the firm red lips, the low straight forehead. She had one of those faces which do not flicker and become unsure and vague. It made him think of the beautiful figurehead of a ship set upon its course.

She seemed so sure.

He said: "Well—I suppose there are occasions when any sort of prevarication is pretty contemptible. In a way I was responsible for giving poor Hattersley a push."

She looked at him again, suddenly, searchingly.

"So—was I."

"You?"

"Yes—need I explain?"

It was Jekyll whose eyes turned aside.

"Am I that sort of ass? I think Stout wants us." . . .

It was the day after Hattersley's funeral. Ann lay back in her chair in the garden. She was pleasantly tired. She still had to shut up her chicken-houses; but the last job of the day could wait. She was in a mood which a more sentimental age would have described as "Self-communing with God in your garden." Ann had no god, and she was not sentimental. She read Aldous Huxley. If she said things to herself, they were plain, pragmatical things.

A sound disturbed her, the opening and closing of the white garden gate. She looked to the left along the grass path, and saw Jekyll there. He was in the full sunlight and carrying a fruit-basket shaped like a large flower-pot with a handle. He came deliberately and almost ominously toward her along the grass path. She did not stir in her chair.

"Brought you a few apples."

He had brought her much else. That was as obvious to her as his basket.

"Did you pick them yourself?"

"I did."

"Good for you!"

He set the basket on the grass, and since there was no other chair, and he did not wish to stand and be dismissed, he sat down on the grass beside his basket.

"Mustn't do that. Dew falling."

"Didn't primitive man ever sit on the ground?"

"Probably. He was— Go and get a chair. You'll find one in the porch."

He went. He came back with a second deck-chair and set it up beside hers, but with the basket of apples between them. His gravity was not the gravity of Mr. Jekyll. He stood for a moment looking at the sunset.

"I suppose—the Hesperides are still over there. Do you ever indulge in fantasy?"

"Why not?"

His downward glance met her upward one. They seemed to feel each other like the blades of two foils.

"Well, to be frank, whenever I have ventured an opinion, some one has snubbed me. That sort of thing makes one's curiosity rather tentative."

He sat down, and she picked an apple out of the basket, and turned it over. It was a Keswick Codling, and its skin was almost as warm as the skin of a peach.

"Do you know the name of it?"

"No. Instruct me."

"I'm no wiser than you are."

He too took an apple from the basket. Each was gaz-

ing at an apple as though it were the crystal globe of a clairvoyant. Jekyll was thinking: "She hasn't snubbed me tonight. Why?" And she was thinking of him as the man who had fought Hattersley and thrashed him; and it counted with her more than he knew.

"I want to talk to you about something. No, not about myself. As a matter of fact, I'm feeling rather responsible. Just this detail: for the last two years I have been writing a history of modern philosophy. Rather silly, don't you think?"

"Why—silly?"

"Well, shall we say—superfluous? I have come to the conclusion that I am not a philosopher."

"And the alternative? But isn't this rather personal?"

He threw up the apple and caught it.

"Just a confession of failure, that's all. After I had knocked that poor soul about—the other night. Yes, next morning I had to go up a ladder and cut him down. Cutting that rope was a sort of symbolical act. Understand? Yes, you do. Well, it's better to live than to scribble. I'm going back into socks and knickers."

"Isn't that going back rather far?"

"Oh, one speeds up—the childishness. In fact, I may remature quite quickly. Second youth. But the pith of the matter is—I want to do things."

She smiled at his purposeful profile.

"Still rather personal."

He flushed slightly.

"Oh, damn, so it is! Tolerate me a moment. I'm not thinking of Jekyll according to Jekyll, but of Jekyll in relation to—other people, especially the people down yonder. Do you get me?"

"Oh, yes, much more clearly. Jove comes down from Olympus."

He turned on her almost fiercely.

"Nothing of the kind. Don't make me swear. Jove's all cardboard. Look here, young woman—"

"I'd rather not be called that."

"All right. Look here, Mistress Ann, there are occasions when I should like to smack you."

She sat forward in her chair with the apple between her hands.

"I shouldn't do that either if I were you. . . . By the way, I have to shut up the chicken-houses."

"Can I help?"

"If you care to."

"Where shall I put these apples? On the porch?"

"Yes. We can collect them when we come back."

Chapter Twelve

JEKYLL spent the whole morning playing with figures. In stocks and shares and real-estate he was worth some two hundred and sixty thousand pounds. He estimated his income, after the deduction of income tax and surtax, at about seven thousand pounds. A quite moderate figure. He found that he had over five thousand pounds lying idle at the bank.

He jotted down a very rough estimate of his current expenses. The items totaled two thousand eight hundred pounds. Well, supposing he fixed the gross figure at three thousand pounds? He was left with four thousand pounds a year, idle money that accumulated or was spent upon articles of vertu, a collector's knick-knacks, antique junk, a rich man's whimsies. Rather an inadequate result!

He played games with the four thousand pounds, split it into fractions, decanted it into various vessels. Four thousand pounds could employ some twenty-six men at three pounds a week for a year. Or he could subsidize the whole of Bluewater, and provide the members of the community with modest incomes. Charity? Charity should confine itself to the sick and the helpless. Moreover, indiscriminate interference could be dangerous and damnable. Other people's lives, making a sort of laboratory of a place like Bluewater in which to conduct interesting personal experiments! He sat and looked out of the window at those tranquil trees, and the shadows on the grass. One needed to be constructive, not a scatterer of fortuitous five-pound notes.

MR. BERRYMAN occupied at the Anchor Inn the same little suite that had been sacred to Jekyll. He was a curiously porcine person whose walk was a waddle, his big head attached to the torso by a very short, thick neck. He had a curious way of grunting at people, especially at the staff, and of swinging his head suddenly to one side and emitting a sharp and ripping, "What!" He suffered from slight deafness, and he would utter this fierce exclamation while the head waiter was trying to make polite conversation.

The staff of the Anchor Inn did not like Mr. Berryman, nor did Archie Stout. Mr. Berryman wore a ring, and rather loud checks; he had a brutal mouth, and eyes of a crude and angry blueness. He shouted about the place, a squat, strong formidable animal whose career had been initiated in a butcher's shop during the war. Mr. Berryman with a cleaver in his red fist attacking raw meat was but the prototype of Mr. Berryman of the Blue Bee Coaches.

In 1922 he had owned three butcher's-shops. In 1924 he had joined a syndicate and bought a London hotel. Exploring other possibilities, he had taken over a West End garage, enlarged it, energized it, and put his first two buses on the road. They had proved very successful, so successful that Mr. Berryman had expanded the enterprise. His buses had become a fleet of motor coaches plying to South coast watering-places. They were painted white and carried on their broad sides the sign of the Blue Bee. Mr. Berryman's company ran week-end trips. He had contracts with various seaside hotels, and the contracts were very much in favor of Mr. Berryman.

Jekyll's meeting with Mr. Berryman was fortuitous, and somewhat unpleasantly so. He was driving into Sax-bourne in the Bentley, and about a mile beyond Westling in a straight section of the road by Windmill Farm, a horseless wagon stood drawn up on the off-side under the bank. The two cars were equidistant from the gap, and the road was Jekyll's. He held on at forty, only to realize that the driver of the blue car was crowding him for precedence, counting upon bluffing the Bentley into braking. On several recent occasions Jekyll had been the victim of this form of caddishness. He drove straight for the space between the wagon and the left-hand verge, determined that the other fellow should not flout him.

But the confrontation became so inevitable that both drivers had to brake. Jekyll, with his front near wheel on the grass, found himself jammed up against the blue car. Mr. Berryman had crumpled a fender against the hub of a wagon-wheel. His front near mud-guard had buckled its lower third against the Bentley's running-board.

The drivers sat within five feet of each other, and Jekyll did not let the opportunity escape him.

"What the devil do you mean by crowding down on me like that?"

Mr. Berryman gave him shot for shot.

"You go to hell! I had plenty of time to get through."

"So you expected me to hold back for you, did you?"

"What?"

"I said, you expected me to stop and let you hog it. Now, wait a moment. I have one or two things to say. You had better go home and get some one to teach you to drive, and also, if possible, to teach you the elements of decency. Yes, I said *decency*. Now, back out."

Mr. Berryman bellowed: "Back out yourself, you—"

Jekyll opened the off door three inches.

"Look here, you damned cad—either you back out, or I'll pull you out."

"What?"

"You heard me, I think. This car stays where it is. Back out, and be quick about it."

He got out of the Bentley and stood in front of Mr. Berryman's radiator. Mr. Berryman glared at him, put his gear-lever into the reverse, and with some complaining of metal, extricated his car from the jam. As the blue car moved backward, Jekyll followed it. He followed it until Berryman had swung it over to its right side behind the wagon. He stood at the Berryman window.

"Thank you. And the next time you find yourself in a similar situation, remember—"



MAGGS

Mr. Berryman used a very vulgar word. He repeated it. Jekyll, unpleasantly cool, and suddenly and icily amused, looked hard at him.

"I think you had better go home and get into bed, and try an ice-bag."

Returning insouciantly to the Bentley, he entered it at his leisure, closed the door with an easy gesture, and sat for fully a minute pulling on a pair of wash-leather gloves. Deliberately and delicately he put the red car in motion, and as it glided past Mr. Berryman's window, he saluted him.

"Remember—manners, manners. Good day to you."

Once more Mr. Berryman flung at him that vulgar word.

WHEN Jekyll opened the Four Firs garden gate and walked up the grass path, he wondered what her welcome would be. Could anything be more elusive than her candor?

He had his hand on the old-fashioned bell-handle when he heard her voice hailing him.

"Hallo. No use ringing. Everybody out."

He turned to face the garden and the sea, but he could not see her anywhere, though the voice had seemed to come from the garden.

"Where are you hiding?"

"No, Mr. Jekyll, I'm not hiding."

He saw the end of a ladder sloping upward into the heart of an apple tree.

"Hallo—sneaking my job?"

"I did not know you had one."

"Don't be so ruthless."

"Come and catch hold of this basket."

She was in riding-breeches, stockings and pullover, and as he stood on the lowest rung of the ladder and reached up for the basket, she descended a step.

"Mind your hand."

"All right. Eve does her own raiding of the tree of knowledge in these degenerate days."

Her downward smile was elfish.

"How's philosophy?"

"On the shelf. Are you going to stay up there?"

"No. Coming down."

He made way for her, but he kept a hand on the ladder as though to steady it. She came to earth; and he, waiting upon her mood, found her glances elusive, and wondered.

"If philosophy is on the shelf, what have you been doing?"

"You wouldn't guess, and I sha'n't tell you."

"How much on it?"

"The price of twelve dozen eggs."

"Pay up. They are one and eight a dozen."

"I'd like some evidence—"

She stood with one foot on the ladder.

"It was awfully decent of you. Squirrel asked me to drop the packing-case at Westling station. No, I'm not taking your money."

He looked at the foot on the ladder.

"Gossip, my dear. I wanted the things for some one. A perfectly legitimate piece of shopping."

"Oh, quite." Her eyes lifted to his. "Do you know what it means to Freda? She will be able to have a fire this winter."

She saw his face go strangely serious.

"Good Lord, wouldn't she have had?"

"No."

"Well, I seem to be getting attached to a different school of philosophy."

Chapter Thirteen

OF the imminence of the Assyrian invasion there was no word, until Berryman appeared suddenly in the estate office.

Mr. Maggs met him with engaging vivacity.

"Good morning, sir. You've come about the bungalow site?"

Mr. Berryman wanted to have his joke, though it might be a rather brutal joke.

"No."

"I'm sorry, sir. I'm sure you wouldn't regret—"

"What?"

"I'm sure you wouldn't regret purchasing a site here."

Mr. Berryman lit a cigar.

"Got an estate map?"

"Yes sir. But—"

"Hand it over. I'm taking a look around."

"Would you like me to accompany you? There are one or two plots on the old cliff, sir."

Mr. Berryman exploded his bomb.

"Not interested in postage-stamps. I'm buying the whole album."

"I beg your pardon, sir?"

"I said, I'm buying the whole album."

"Buying Bluewater?"

"Yep."

"But I haven't received any—"

"No need, was there? Confidential business between principals. Got that map?"

Mr. Maggs looked rather white. He was wondering how the transfer would affect him personally.

"Excuse me, sir, but are you going to develop—"

"What?"

"Develop it—as a building venture?"

"No business of yours, is it?"

"No, sir; of course not, sir. But if I could be of any use—"

Mr. Berryman looked contemptuously round the untidy office.

"This your idea of business? Not much good to me. I'm Berryman of the Blue Bee Coaches. Going to put some guts into this place. Make it hum, yep! A thousand visitors a day—by coach. Won't be quite so arty—but more hearty. Get me? But

don't gossip about it all over the place!"

Mr. Maggs looked like a dog about to whimper.

"No sir. Of course not, sir. But what about—the other people here?"

"What people?"

"The tenants of the—"

"You mind your business, my lad, and don't ask silly questions."

"But really, sir, it's a rather serious matter. The leases—"

"There won't be any leases. You'd better tidy up this office. I'm not taking over a waste-paper basket. And keep your mouth shut."

He left poor Maggs bleached and trembling.

BERRYMAN'S car was parked outside the office, and Mr. Berryman had only to cross the road and diverge slightly to the right to find himself outside the Sign of the Squirrel. He stood outside Miss Nuthall's shop, and considered its fate. Situated as it was at the beginnings of Bluewater, it would form an admirable nucleus for a garage and depot and ticket-office. He walked into the shop, and at his leisure took stock of it. Freda, busy with her knitting-needles, jumped up to attend to the gentleman.

"Can I help you to choose something?"

Mr. Berryman appeared amused.

"No. I'm buying the place. I shall want this building. Your lease runs out at the end of the year."

Miss Nuthall's knitting-needles trembled.

"You're not turning me out?"

"You'll have proper notice. Sorry. Going to alter this place—considerably. Better make arrangements."

His next visit was to Ye Olde Shoppe.

Such had been the Berryman effect upon Gerald Maggs that he ran out like a torch-bearer, crying the dreadful news: "The barbarian is at the gates." He went first to the Anchor Inn, and found Archie Stout serving cocktails and drinks in the ward-room.

"Excuse me, Mr. Stout, but have you heard?"

"Heard what, my lad?"

"The estate's being sold. I've had the buyer in. Can you spare a moment?"

Judging by Gerald's face, the crisis was catastrophic. Stout went out with him on the sea-wall.

"Who's the buyer?"

"That fellow who was staying at your place, Mr. Stout. Man named Berryman."

"That!"

"Yes."

"What's the—"

"Apparently he controls the Blue Bee coaches. He's going to turn this place into a miniature Blackpool. Everybody is going to get the push—except you, of course."

"Do you mean he is going to make this place a terminus for his coaches, and dump trippers by the thousand?"

"That's the idea."

"Good God! This is damned serious. Weren't you told anything?"

"Not a word."

"It means putting the kibosh on the whole show. I wonder if he has been to Mrs. Merriman's and Jimmy's."

"Believe so."

"I'd better see."

Stout hurried across to Ye Olde Shoppe, to find Gilda sitting in the forecourt and enjoying the sunshine of St. Luke's Summer.

"I say, Gilda, Maggs has just been telling me. That fellow who was staying with me—"

"Yes, I've seen him."

Her face was both whimsical and kind.

"He suggested that I might sell up the junk, and carry on as cigarettes and sweets. I'm afraid it really is serious, Archie. Pigs in clover."

He sat down beside her.

"Damn it, the trustees might have warned us! This means blue ruin to my show. And you? Are you going to convert?"

"No."

"Which means he won't renew your lease?"

"That's it."

"And the Jettisons and Freda, and all the rest?"

She nodded.

"Not in the picture, Archie. We're redundant, obsolete. The Berryman world—he's rather awful, and his bright new motor-coach world—"

STOUT got up and stamped to and fro.

"Perfectly damnable! We must try and do something about it."

"What can we do?"

"Has he actually bought the place?"

"I don't know. But he is behaving as though he has. It must be pretty certain."

Stout was looking up the valley to Moor Place. A corner of the white house was visible.

"By George, nice for Mr. Jekyll! Southend-on-Sea concentrated under his nose. Wonder if he has heard?"

And suddenly Stout's blue eyes lit up.

"Wonder if he could do anything? I don't suppose he'd be sufficiently piqued. But there's a chance."

Stout's two-seater pulled up outside Moor Place just as Jekyll was sitting down to lunch.

"What's the trouble, Stout?"

"You may not be interested, sir, but Bluewater is being sold. We have only just heard."

"Oh! Who's buying?"

"A fellow who came down and put up at my place two or three weeks ago. Rather a swine of a fellow named Berryman. Responsible for the Blue Bee coaches."

Jekyll glanced up sharply.

"Didn't drive a big blue car, by any chance?"

"That's the fellow."

"Indeed. Well, I'm rather interested. What's the situation?"

"It's pretty—serious, sir. He is going to push everybody out, and turn Bluewater into a sort of joy-garden for the *hoi polloi*. He has been going round telling poor Freda, and Mrs. Merriman, and the Jettisons, that they will have to quit."

"Nice person. Not very pleasant for your show, Stout."

"Absolutely deadly, sir."

"Not very pleasant for me."

"No sir. I think the trustees ought to have—"

"I agree. Has the purchase been completed?"

"We don't know. There might be just a chance. I wondered whether you would be sufficiently interested—"

Jekyll got up and rang the bell.

"I am most distinctly interested. I know one of the trustees—Studland is a member of my club."

Santer appeared at the door.

"Yes sir?"

"Tell Smith to have the Bentley outside in half an hour. London. I shall want him."

"Yes sir."

Stout's face was half hidden for a moment by the tankard. He drank long and deep.

"It's most awfully good of you, sir."

"Not a bit. I'll get hold of Studland and see how things stand. I don't know that I want a fellow like Berryman under my nose. He—"

Stout nodded emphatically.

"Absolutely so, sir. Trotters in the trough. The blatant beast! I found poor little Freda shaking like a leaf."

Jekyll looked at his watch.

"We'll see what can be done about it."

Chapter Fourteen

IT was an evening which remained in Jekyll's memory for the vividness of its contrasts and the sweet tang of a mood. He came over that last Sussex hill just about dusk, and he saw the world as all gold and blue—autumn leaves, the sea, the sky. The greenness was there, but somehow mute in the presence of those royal blues and golds. A flutter of beech leaves over the grass, chrysanthemums in a cottage garden, wine in the air.

He wanted to laugh—but why? And why this sense of poignancy, and of life holding a heart of flame? He saw Bluewater grow beneath him, red and white at the edge of the pale sand and the darkening amethyst of the sea. A little Greek town under the ægis of the night. And he was the potential lord of Bluewater, the god in a chariot, crowned with vine-leaves.

He was aware of Stout running out from the yellow doors of the Anchor Inn. He was speaking to Stout.

"I was just in time."

Stout's face seemed to grow more round and real.

"Not sold?"

"I got in an offer. Nothing's settled yet, of course. The battle is just beginning."

"That's—great! And great of you, sir. The whole place has been sitting on the fence, waiting. . . . Have you had any dinner, sir?"

"No—I thought you would like the news."

"Dinner is just on here, sir. I can give you some oysters. I mean—as my guest, of course."

How easy it was to win a man's good will! But the more enduring faith was not picked up in the open market. Young Hanson was smiling at him and spreading his serviette. In the kitchen, Stout was opening oysters with his own hands. He appeared in the dining-room beside Jekyll's chair.

"I have some very good sherry, sir."

"It doesn't like me, Stout. But it's very charming of you. . . . I think I'd like a whisky."

"I have some pre-war."

"Don't open a bottle for me."

"Nothing could give me greater pleasure, sir. Besides, I'll find some people to finish the bottle."

A little later he was seen running like a ghost in a ghostly sweater, an apparition that knocked at doors and uttered words of exultation.

"Gilda—reprieve! Jekyll's in the market. Got in just before the door shut."

His message became a little more breathless as he proceeded from house to house.

"Jimmy, we've got a gentleman on the job. He may save our throats for us."

He met young Fielden wandering in the half-darkness.

"Jekyll's out to buy Bluewater."

Young Fielden stood and stared.

"For keeps?"

"It's his—for a night, anyhow. He has come into the market against that ruddy cad."

"Good for Mr. Jekyll! But can he hold up the rhinoceros and all the Blue Bee chariots?"

"He's a rich man, my lad."

"Thank God, anyhow, for some rich men."

THE lights of Bluewater, and the stars.

He walked up and down the dark terrace; and in the east there was a spreading radiance, the emergence of a moon. Moor Place was Olympus, and he Zeus, and again

he was moved to laughter; but the laughter was against himself. Had Zeus suffered from dyspepsia as well as from the pangs of love? Strange how your indigestion vanished when you began to recover a healthy appetite for life. Interested? Ye gods, yes! But if Bluewater remained his in the battle against Berryman, what was he going to do with it?

A shadowy Santer appeared in the white Georgian doorway.

"Mr. Jekyll, sir?"

"Hullo."

"A lady to see you."

"Who?"

"Miss Jerrard, sir."

"Please ask her to come out here."

He waited by the white doorway. He did not explain to her why the night should be his parlor. Sussex and the Sussex sea were to be flood-lit by the moon.

He said: "It's rather pleasant here. In a week or two we shall have our toes by the fire. What are my lady's wishes?"

They stood by the stone steps, and looked down at the lights of Bluewater.

"I wondered whether you could help. I don't suppose you have heard? Beastly impertinence, of course."

"Nothing could be impertinent on a night like this. But perhaps—I have heard."

"All that is being bought—by a rather foul person. It means—"

"A commercial cad."

"Yes."

"Well, I'm afraid—Bluewater has been sold to the rich man. At least, it is his for the moment."

He glanced at her dim face.

"How—ghastly! He's turning out all those poor people."

"I think that is a slight exaggeration."

"No."

"Well, at the moment, I certainly have no intention of removing the Jettisons and Mrs. Merriman."

Her eyes were on his face.

"You?"

"Yes. I own Bluewater—on paper. Yes, I rushed up to town and managed to get in just before the doors closed. Of course, the other gentleman will put up the price; and I shall—of course—go one better."

The illusion of her coldness vanished.

"How frightfully—great, of you! Oh, do try and keep the brute out."

"I most certainly shall. Visor down, spear in rest, what? In these days, one does not expect—garlands."

He slipped a hand under her arm.

She said: "There are better things than garlands."

He answered: "Yes. I rather believe so too."

Chapter Fifteen

MR. BERRYMAN had raised his offer to fourteen thousand five hundred pounds.

Mr. Jekyll countered it with an offer of fifteen thousand pounds.

Mr. Berryman, who had returned to town, when advised of the fact, shouted: "I'll go bang at seventeen thousand pounds. That may stuff it up him."

Messrs. Fagg, Grimside and Smart were duly informed that the other gentleman had raised his figure to seventeen thousand one hundred pounds.

Mr. Berryman chortled. He was not sensitive to the wicked subtlety of that odd hundred pounds.

"Got him, I think! He's drying up. Make it seventeen two."

Then Mr. Jekyll did the same unkind thing to Mr. Berryman. He raised the figure to eighteen thousand pounds.

Mr. Berryman fumed and chewed. He might be a rich man, but nine-tenths of his capital was tied up in the Blue Bee Company. He had three thousand pounds on deposit at his bank, and current balance of £1733.5.7. He had arranged with his bank for a loan of ten thousand pounds. He held fifty-five per cent of the ordinary shares in the Blue Bee Company, but were he to dispose of too many of those shares, his margin of control would vanish.

He was in a most unpleasant temper.

He went to interview the manager of his bank. He demanded a loan of twenty thousand pounds, and offered

to deposit as security twenty-five thousand one-pound Bee Ordinary shares. The manager was polite and evasive. He said that the matter was rather too weighty for his decision, and that he would be compelled to consult headquarters.

"But damn it, man, I want the money."

"I will take the matter up at once, Mr. Berryman."

Meanwhile, Bluewater stood and listened to the and distant reverberations of an invisible battle. Vainly the barbarian vanquish the Roman? Gerald Maggs gloomy as to the issue. Blue Bee coaches bulked in the new world. Mr. Jekyll might be a well-to-do but could he fob off Juggernaut? Archie Stout about with a face of quiet but jocund confidence. A man who could afford to run a Bentley and a Rolls might match for Blue Bee Berryman. . . .

Meanwhile the bank had notified Mr. Berryman the limit of their loan was fifteen thousand pounds. Faith in the Blue Bee company was not catholic, but the strength of this loan Mr. Berryman rose to eight thousand five hundred pounds.

"That'll about cork him."

But it didn't. He heard next day that his opponent had climbed to nineteen thousand pounds.

WHEN Richard Jekyll had signed the contract,—he spent the previous night in town,—he sent Archie Stout a telegram.

I HAVE BOUGHT BLUEWATER. SHALL BE AT MOOR PLACE THIS AFTERNOON.

Stout threw up his béret. He was one of those who must celebrate an occasion. For the last few years he had kept a storm-cone hoisted on the hotel flag as a sign to all that dirty weather still threatened. Bluewater understood such symbolism. It was about ten o'clock when Jekyll's telegram arrived, and Stout rushed out and hauled down the storm-cone, and in its stead up the Union Jack.

Gilda, standing in the doorway of the shop, saw the flag go up. She called to Gwen and Maisie:

"Mr. Jekyll's the winner."

"Oh, marvelous! How do you know?"

"Archie has lowered the storm-cone."

Gwen kissed her, and cuddled close.

"Oughtn't we to do something?"

"I rather think Archie's going to do something."

Jimmy Jettison came running on his little legs, a face like the face of an excited child.

"Seen it?"

"We have."

Jimmy kissed the three of them.

"I want to dance, I want to sing. Tra-la-la! All little wheels go wiz-wiz-wiz!"

Gwen and Maisie, joining hands with him, made a circle round Gilda. "Ring—a ring of roses. No ruddy noses." They skipped and sang—any sort of sense, while Gilda laughed.

"Hullo, here's Archie."

Stout came running, sweater in wrinkles, béret on back of his head.

"Hullo, hullo! Seen my signal—what? Yes, I have. Just phoned that orchestra at Saxbourn for the 'Five Fantastics.' Going to dance and let off fireworks. Dinner-dance. Everybody invited."

The girls fell upon him.

"You are a lamb."

"Isn't he a sweet babe, Gilda?"

Archie hugged one in each arm.

"Going to try and get the great man. Hope he'll mind a little binge in his honor. What do you think, Gilda?"

She smiled.

"Nobody does, really."

Stout drove up to the Four Firs, to ask Ann to join the show, and by the white gate he found Jekyll's red Bentley waiting. It had arrived just two minutes before him.

"Ha, romance!"

Stout backed his car out of the entrance and parked it in the lane. A tactful fellow could wait there unheeded voices, or the sound of a car preparing to leave, and then show himself as though he had just arrived.

Jekyll was not a hundred yards away, opening the wire gates in the upper field. The sun was shining

and the oaks in the wood above were all gold. He saw Ann's white coat in the center of a little smother of white birds. It was feeding-time.

She did not see him until she had scattered the last handful of corn from her bowl.

"Hallo!"

She had the sun in her eyes and on her hair.

"I've bought Bluewater."

"You've won?"

"Yes."

"I rather thought you would."

"Glad?"

"Oh, more than glad."

They stood and watched the birds feeding.

He said: "It's only my money that has won. I quite realize that. I'm just at the beginning of things. This is going to be a real live problem."

She let a little silence go by.

"You don't expect me to say anything priggish?"

"Could you?"

"Well, I have, on occasions."

"I want you to help."

"Me?"

"Yes. Help me to refrain from being a well-meaning meddler, serving up other people's lives in the soup."

She held out a hand.

"I'm not much good as a cook—but I'll try it."

They kept Stout waiting half an hour, but when he heard their voices, he started up his engine, and drove boldly and blandly up to the gate. He raised his beret.

"Congratulations, sir! Two birds with one smile. I've run up the right flag. . . .

Ann, will you come and dine and dance tonight? The Anchor is giving a show."

He could not wink at her, but the very steadfastness of his stare hinted at the impulse.

"Love to. Are you—"

"Oh, celebrating. Great occasion."

He smiled tentatively at Jekyll.

"You won't mind, sir, will you? The Anchor's *en fête* tonight. Dinner and dance and fireworks. I called at your place—fact is, we'd all be most awfully pleased if you would join us."

"No speeches, Stout?"

"Ye gods, no sir."

"Then I'll come. What time?"

"Dinner at seven-thirty, sir."

Stout put on his beret. Hermes had delivered his message.

"Splendid, sir! See you at seven-thirty,"—and he trotted back to his car.

Said Jekyll, watching Stout back out into the lane: "I like that buccaneer. Sort of fellow who makes you feel warm inside. By the way—I haven't danced for three years."

She laughed.

"Then you won't be stale."

"I don't quite like that word. Let me fetch you and drive you down."

She appeared to consider the offer. Her mouth and eyes were vibrant with mischief.

"No. I'll go down in the egg-van. Can I pick you up?"

He smiled at her.

"All right. I'll ride in the egg-van."

Jekyll was to recover many impressions from that night, and the first of them was associated with the solemnity of Santer—Santer with his suet face announcing the chariot, "The car's here, sir," Santer attempting to tuck a rug round his knees when he had seated himself beside Miss Jerrard in the cabin of the little van.

"Take the thing away, Santer."

Absurd ministrations! Did he need a rug? Wasn't he a man? Though it did occur to him to speculate upon what the menial minds of Santer and the staff would make of the adventure. Did the servants' hall gossip, and giggle? It did. Santer, with his solemnity shed like an opera cloak, appeared in the staff room with a hand over his mouth smothering mock explosions.

"He's gone off with the egg-lady. Hope they won't break any eggs."

"Coo. Had he got his cloak and opera hat on?"

"Always the gent."

It was the cook who took up the cudgels for her ployer.

"Well, I don't see anything funny in that. It takes a gentleman to ride in an egg-van. Some people would reach-me-down in a Rolls."

The stars and the domes of the autumn trees were pinging past. A rabbit scurried across the drive, its white scout showing up for a moment in the glare of the headlights.

"Good night, bunny—happy dreams."

She slowed the van up at the gate, and pressed the hooter button, and he glanced at her shadowy profile.

"I'm on the right side of things tonight."

"No crashes, I trust!"

"I hope not. You're going to dance with me?"

"That's my fate."

"Every other dance, my dear."

"No, not quite as often as that."

As they descended Bluewater hill, saw a rocket go up from the Anchor, burst over the sea and scattered a handful of red and green stars.

"Hallo—ship in distress! Stout's letting things off rather early."

"Perhaps that means the soup is served."

"Then we are late."

"No, I expect it's just—joy."

Stout appeared in the loggia as the van drew in, and for the moment he did not distinguish Jekyll.

"Hallo! I thought—"

"Evening, Stout."

"That you, sir? Splendid!"

This indeed was the spirit of Bluewater, its new owner arriving on the festive night in an egg-van. Stout turned to the humor and the humanity of the thing. His red shirt was all friendly crinkles. His shirt-front bulged; Stout's white shirts always bulged. Jekyll got out, and parked her car, while the two men waited on the last steps.

"Somebody let off a rocket, Stout."

"Just one—for joy, sir. We are going to illuminate the terrace. Glad it's such a kind night."

Ann joined them, and Stout held open a glass of champagne. Ann's dim figure became green and gold, and the collar under her chin was white. The sudden color of her dress became part of the color of the lounge. Nearly everybody stood up, and Jekyll was conscious of feeling shy. There was Mrs. Gilda in yellow, Maisie and Gwen in blue velvet, June Jettison the color of a rose, Selma in purple velvet, Miss Nuthall pale primrose. Jimmy Jettison had animation. Young Derrek looked vaguely aloof, somehow unwilling to glance at Ann. Aubrey Benson wearing a velvet coat. There were a dozen or more visitors who were to share in the show.

Stout had tact. A man like Jekyll would shy like a thoroughbred at social fireworks. He took Ann's coat, Jekyll's hat and cloak.

"Well, here's all Bluewater."

Jekyll walked toward Mrs. Merriman. They smiled at each other.

He said: "I rather think we are going to enjoy ourselves. I arrived in the egg-van, and believe me, I'm not adding to the trouble."

The lounge laughed with him and for him, and not him, like his staff.

"I always enjoy myself, Mr. Jekyll."

"Inevitably."

He was shaking hands with them all—liking it.

Jettison's brown eyes were warm and gentle.

"We ought not to say anything, I know, but—"

He smiled down on her.

"One should always pause—at the but. Hallo, Jimmy! We shall want an art-director."

Jettison's baby face was as surprised as a child's. Jekyll calling him Jimmy! Apparently there was no floating ice in Bluewater—though there might be in Archie's champagne pails.

"I feel an urge toward—song, sir."

"Well, let's sing."

The voice of Gwen shrilled out:



"Yes, let's all sing like one o'clock. Good old Jack Payne."

The dining-room doors opened, and Hanson stood there.

"Dinner is served, sir."

"Come along, everybody. Mr. Jekyll, I think you—"

He looked round for Ann.

"Absolutely so. I came down—"

"Lead on, Miss Jerrard, lead on."

Jekyll crooked an arm. He was thinking how much he liked Ann's dress. Yes, he liked all the frocks. He did not see them as improvisations, cheap, homemade products. Ann was in apple green, a slim sheath.

He said: "I like your frock."

She replied: "So do I."

Jekyll's experience of dinners had been varied and expansive, society dinners, city dinners, charity dinners, and most deplorable of all, those literary dinners when you were riveted to your chair for three sacred hours, listening to casual music and the boomings of fellows like Harold Catchpole. How was it that overripe, ponderous and perspiring prigs like Catchpole were always oratorical and upon platforms? Yes, Jekyll had dined de luxe at Biarritz, Monte Carlo, Rome, Luxor, Calcutta, New York, Montevideo, but this chance *festa* at a Sussex inn was an affair of other worlds. The people were different; he was different. Bluewater was hungry and thirsty; a dinner was a dinner, and champagne—champagne. These people were like a lot of kids, nice kids. They were ready to play with him; and while engaged upon his History of Philosophy, he had forgotten how to play.

Stout's party sat at a long table, the hotel guests at their own tables: Oysters, and brown bread and butter, and sherry. The Five Fantastics were tuning up in the recess of a baywindow, and the center of the dining-room showed a square of yellow parquet. Jimmy Jettison was contemplating the five oysters on his plate with a happy gastronomic smile. There was virtue in oysters.

Mrs. Merriman held the head of the table, with Jekyll on her right.

"Now, children, don't be greedy."

"Why shouldn't one be greedy?"

Jekyll gave Gwen a sympathetic nod.

"Why not? Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow that taxmonger calls."

Said Stout: "Here, here, sir! Let us look on the wine when it is red. Let us gaze upon fair women. Let us do all the healthy, happy things which the Saxbourne Watch Committee say we should not do. I confess that I am a pagan."

JUST as the first champagne-bottle was opened, something went *bang* out under the October stars. Miss Nuthall jumped in her chair. Gwen and Maisie, assuming sudden faintness, each laid a head on Derrek's shoulders. Stout laughed uproariously.

"Don't be alarmed, please. My handy man letting off a maroon. Also it is the signal for the band to burst into song."

Said Jekyll to Ann: "For a moment I thought it might be a Berryman bomb. As I said previously, I do like your frock."

Presently, between pheasant and *pêche melba*, they all rushed out on to the terrace to see the fireworks show. Stout's handy man dashed hither and thither like some dark Satan applying an improvised torch to rockets, revolving wheels, canisters of red and green fire. Some one threw a Chinese cracker out of the darkness, and it fell at Freda's feet. She let out a little yelp, and jumping aside, fell against Jekyll.

"Oh, so sorry! Please excuse—"

He supported her for a moment.

"From my point of view, it's quite—excusable, Miss Nuthall."

She simpered.

"So very kind of you. Oh, do look at the red fire!"

Said Stout: "No squibs, please. Is it making you blush, Freda?"

Jekyll had found Ann's hand, and was holding it.

"I regret to say I'm not blushing. Quite shameless me. I like it."

He heard her laugh.

"Am I?"

He pretended to scrutinize her face, but at that moment a green flare eclipsed the red.

"No, not in the least."

Stout was shouting.

"Rosy raptures over. Back to *pêche melba*."

"Or Methuselah."

Gwen and Maisie were singing a song that was out of date, "Why do I love you? Why do you love me?" and Jekyll laughed.

"Heaven knows why? The only thing that matters that—we do. I beg your pardon—I mean I do."

They danced. Jekyll danced with everybody—Gwen, Miss Nuthall, Selma, Gwen, Maisie and Archie.

He danced as he had never danced in the slightly bored Elysium of a too opulent past. Maisie said to Derrek, "Isn't he a lamb!" and Derrek, consumed with seething bitterness, yet managed to transcend it. "He seems to be enjoying himself." Derrek had not danced with Ann, but he smiled at her. "All right—I know. Forbidden fruit. One can't bear to touch forbidden fruit. Nobody's fault but mine."

Stout danced like a tornado. He pushed and handled and perspired, and the bulge of his shirt betrayed a limpness. He said to Gilda: "Isn't he a sahib? I really believe he is enjoying our show." Gilda's eyes were on Jekyll and Miss Jerrard. "No need to worry, Archie. He is very much on his cave." Stout, pondering some problem, missed a step. "Sorry—I should like to have proposed a toast. . . . Better not, perhaps. What do you think?"

Gilda glanced over a shoulder.

"No, don't spoil his play. It's not condescension, dear. He's feeling like one of us."

They danced till midnight, and it was Ann who broke the party. She had a day's work to do next day; would be up at six; she had birds to feed, and a morose supervise. Everybody came out into the loggia to Jekyll and Miss Jerrard leave in the egg-van. It was a fitting climax, pure Bluewater.

"Good night—good night."

"Good night, everybody."

The loggia cheered and waved, and Jekyll saluted them.

"What a jolly crowd!"

Jimmy Jettison, whose tie had become still more matted, held on to Stout.

"I do hope Miss Jerrard—won't break our golden egg. His wife reproved him."

"Jimmy! How—"

"Apologize. Shouldn't have said that. Cheap of Apologize."

They saw the rays of the van's lights sweep upward and vanish over Bluewater Hill. Jekyll, with his hat on his knees, watched the rays bring the autumn colors of the hedges into life. Yes, the world of one's consciousness was rather like that. You did not appreciate or understand certain things, until—

He said: "You need not drop me at my gate. I'm going on to your place—as van guard. I'll walk back."

"Don't be absurd. Stone Stile Lane doesn't produce bandits."

"But—I like being absurd. That's what strikes me about that nice crowd down there: they are so absurdly lovable. Let me be absurd."

"Just—absurd?"

"Well, to begin with. The other adjective, of course, is beyond my control. But I do think I can learn to be absurd."

She said: "I think you can."

Chapter Sixteen

PERHAPS when blindness to the thing we call beauty overtakes us, it comes to men sooner than to women. Mrs. Merriman, standing for a moment in the doorway of the library after shedding her cloak and wrap, saw



the hall of Moor Place as Jekyll had willed it—white paneling, black and white checks of tiles, touches of apple green and yellow, mauve curtains across the Georgian door. The new and the old! She had known it in Mallison's day, both shabby and flamboyant; but tonight it satisfied her, she knew not why. Strange, rich loveliness of texture and outline. The young things were still behind her in the library, making bird-like preenings, and emitting intimate, excited chatter.

"Oh, my dear—they haven't laddered yet."

"Don't breathe!"

"I'm sure if I eat too much dinner—"

MR. JEKYLL was mixing cocktails and talking to Ann and Archie Stout. The Moor Place Rolls had gone down a second time for the Jettisons, Selma and Miss Nuthall. Derrek had come up with Stout—but was in hiding for a moment, dealing with a broken shoelace.

"Come on, children. Don't giggle."

"We're not giggling."

Jekyll came down the hall to meet Mrs. Merriman, and he and Gilda smiled into each other's eyes.

"I'm very glad to see you."

Just words, but he looked glad. Gwen and Maisie were a little shy of him, perhaps because in a most unheroic and casual age they were creating the inevitable hero.

"Come along, cocktails! I know that Stout is a super-expert, but I like to feel that I'm an authority. Please sit—yes, by the fire. What can I give you?"

Ann and Mrs. Merriman were kissing each other.

"Oh, just a Martini, please."

"Let me shake, sir."

"All right, Stout."

"I know I shake rather like a jelly. If you young things laugh, I shall—"

"Cigarettes. . . . Are the children allowed cocktails?"

"Oh, Mr. Jekyll!"

"Two orange blossoms, I think, Stout."

"Two orange blossoms, sir."

Derrek appeared from somewhere, smoking a cigarette, and trying to look as though he had been in the house for hours.

He had had trouble with his shirt as well as with a shoelace. The wretched button-holes were worn, and the head of one stud was always slipping through.

Jekyll looked at him kindly.

"What for you, Derrek?"

"Can I have a side-car, sir?"

"How do you compound a side-car, Stout?"

"I'll mix it, sir. Take some scrap-iron, rubber and paint, throw in two or three old cushions, a tin of motor oil, and a spare belt."

"Sounds rather fearsome! Well, it's Derrek's funeral."

Gilda was looking at the glass. It was a lambent green, and it changed its color when the various liquors filled it. The table was ebony, and into it had been let a panel of old papier-mâché surrounded with mother-of-pearl. A posy of flowers, rose, purple, blue.

She said: "What a lovely glass."

He was smiling at Ann, but he turned to her instantly.

"Good glass gives me a kind of *frisson*."

She ran a finger down a slim stem.

"Yes, it's the same with me. One shouldn't make remarks—but I do like your color scheme."

He looked pleased.

"And Jimmy's picture? He is—no, not clever; that's a beastly word. He can play."

Her eyes lit up.

"Yes, that's the very word. Beauty is play, somehow."

He nodded.

"We are going to try and make Bluewater play—not pay."

"It may do both, you know."

"Yes, why not?"

The rest of Bluewater arrived: June in rose, Selma in her purple velvet, Freda the pale primrose, Jimmy even more animated as to the tie. Poor Benson was down with flu. He sent his regrets and apologies through Selma.

"Cocktails, everybody. Miss Nuthall—a side-car, or an orange blossom, or a Bronx?"

Freda simpered.

"So kind! May I have an orange blossom? I don't know what it is, but it sounds—"

Stout could not help chuckling.

"That's the spirit, Squirrel."

During dinner Jekyll realized that his guests were shy of him.

He had foreseen or forefelt this shyness, the self-consciousness of clients in the presence of a patron. Was a rich man always suspect, or did these new friends of his doubt whether Moor Place could comprehend the soul of Bluewater? He was so aware of the pragmatic heartiness of Stout, Miss Nuthall's twittering timidity, Jettison's eager animation, young Fielden's jealous reserve. He was dining these people, but he could suppose that they were a little perplexed and curious as to the future's hospitality, the day's bread and meat. This was a champagne evening, but the mornings would be concerned with milk and butter and eggs.

A glass window was interposed between him and his guests. He sat at the head of the table, and made polite conversation, and was listened to and watched. Did they not trust him? Was he something just a little less brutal than Berryman, but still the unknown dictator? His urge was to smash this sheet of glass.

He had discussed the potential problem with Ann.

"Now, if there is a frost tonight, I shall want to thaw it. I suppose—being comparatively rich makes one an outsider to the comparatively poor. May I throw the bomb, if necessary?"

"You mean—"

He had looked at her whimsically.

"Announce my luck—to the world? It ought to make them realize that I'm both romantic and exceedingly—sane."

"Well—tell them."

And that was what he did. He stood up, champagne glass in hand.

"No, I'm not going to make a speech. One doesn't make speeches to one's friends. I want you to drink to Ann's health. Ann and I are going to be married."

Gwen and Maisie tried not to look at Derrek. Jettison got up and sat down again. Miss Nuthall chirruped.

"I'm—so—glad! I—"

It was Jekyll's cue.

"Well, so am I—gladder than Ann, I think. I have reason to be. She is taking a lazy fellow in hand and reforming him. . . . Please—to my future wife!"

They stood and drank to Ann—Derrek with a kind of dim stare at his glass, Stout robustly, the Jettisons with emotion, Gilda with her Mona Lisa smile.

"Speech, Ann!"

Jekyll laughed.

"No, no! Oratory banned. I think Mrs. Merriman has a saying about people coming out of their caves. Let's all come out of our caves. I think I have come out of my cave. I'm not exactly a hairy ogre. But confound it—I'm making a speech."

There was laughter, a pleasant human sound.

Said Gilda: "Mr. Jekyll understands. Let's all sit in the sun."

Jekyll, bowing to her, sat down.

"Mrs. Merriman has said it: Let's all sit in the sun."

IN the hall afterward, he told them of his plans. They sat round the big fire on sofa, chairs, hassocks. Derrek squatted on a rug. They had become, insensibly so, rather like a big family; and if Jekyll played father, he was a very modern father, not paterfamilias. He was a little shy. In fact, to begin with, he attempted to pass on the performance to Ann, but she would have none of it, nor would Bluewater.

"No, we want to hear you, sir," said Stout.

Actually, Jekyll stammered.

"I wish—you—wouldn't call me *sir*, Stout. I'm neither a baronet nor a—baboon."

He perched on the arm of Ann's chair.

"Well, I suppose I must try and explain the new Bluewater to my fellow-directors, and committee of management. I hope you will all serve. I think some of you know my idea: that Bluewater as Bluewater should not make a profit, but that it should provide its workers with—well—Really, why should one be shamefaced about it?"

Ann lifted a roguish face.

"We don't mind, J. Hard Cash."

Gently he pulled her ear.

"Thank you. Give me time, and I shall cease to be so sensitive about imaginary—prides and prejudices. Why is

tleman a bad hand at a bargain? Why is it that he sell things, and suffers from a sort of false and fine embarrassment, when money is mentioned? My sir, I can't take money for it—I'll give it to you. rd, of course! The gentleman appears to suffer from cial prudery—and he is becoming extinct, like the orian spinster. Now, I hope to cease from being a leman. We are all traders here tonight. We are g to trade what Mr. Maggs describes as 'The Amen- of Bluewater.' I know that Stout understands my and Derrek too. Now I am not going to be ridicu- and gentlemanly: Provided you think the various jobs h while, I can guarantee your salaries for five years. s call it our Five Year Plan, the production and sale eauty at thirty bob a week. Most of you know much e about domestic economy than I do. But I am mak- a devil of a speech!"

glanced from Stout's jocund face to Mrs. Merri- man's. "Have you discussed the idea?" "I should rather think we have!" "Well—won't anybody make suggestions? I appear to oing all the talking." "Are you going to float a company, sir?" "Yes. It should be done that way, shouldn't it? Each tor can hold a nominal number of shares. Ann is g to supervise agriculture and supplies. We shall e our estate farm. We may even create—in time— e estate industries. If civilization crashes, Miss Nut- can knit us all smocks."

looked at Gilda. "Would you be willing, Mrs. Merriman, to run the es- shop?"

"Fruit and vegetables instead of antiques?" "You might retain antiques as a branch line. If Gwen Maisie— Wait a moment. Have you those bits of er, Ann?"

nn opened her bag, took out some folded slips, and ed one of them to Gilda.

Rather like 'Consequences.' Read." "Mrs. Merriman unfolded her slip, and read. The Blue- er Company would offer her four hundred pounds a e and a bonus.

Gwen and Maisie were given slips. They exclaimed over n.

"Oh, Mr. Jekyll!" "Jekyll assumed an air of surprise.

Mr. Jekyll had nothing to do with it. The proposals nate from the Bluewater Company."

"How perfectly—topping—of you!" "He was watching Gilda's face. She smiled at him and ed.

"Yes, I sign on." "Oh, Miss Nuthall, has Ann sounded you?"

reda wriggled as though some one were tickling her. "Oh, yes, Mr. Jekyll. So very kind! I'd love to sell

aps and postal orders and things. Might I still keep all part of the shop for—"

Of course. Miss Nuthall's slip, Ann."

pointed a grave finger at Jimmy.

Mr. Jettison, estate architect and art director. Will act, when you are not painting pictures, and on the mption that you promise to go on painting pictures?"

immy had been given his slip. He showed it to his . Her face expressed strange emotion.

"Four hundred a year! But—" Her voice thrilled the rs. "You don't know what it means to us. I'm sorry.

ght not to get—emotional—" "immy patted his wife's back.

That's all right, dear—that's all right. Mr. Jekyll has to put things on a business—basis. I don't know

ther I'm justified in accepting—the position."

out nodded at him. "No inferiority complex, Jimmy. You can do it."

Miss Dewhurst had been waiting. She spoke. "I'll like to keep Nankin. I don't think I need be a

on the company, Mr. Jekyll."

"That's generous of you. But—" "et me try."

"We shall be only too glad. Derrek, will you run the e social club, our sea-house, and act as secretary e managing director?"

Derrek's red head bent over his slip of paper. He ed up suddenly.

"Yes—I rather think so."

Jekyll stood up, walked to a table and fetched a cigar-box.

"So much talking, I haven't had time to smoke. Now, oughtn't we to go into committee? I'd like Stout to act as chairman tonight. I have an estate map here, and a lot of rough plans and figures. Ann and I have been playing with colored chalks. . . . The table is cleared. I suggest we go back into the dining-room and spread things out."

He offered the cigar-box to Jettison.

"Have one, James. The more I live with your pictures, the more I like them."

Jettison muttered and blushed. . . .

Anyone spying through a window would have been justified in assuming that Mr. Jekyll and his guests were playing some kind of round game. Everybody had pieces of paper and pencils, and when not talking, appeared to be making notes. Mr. Jettison had been provided with a sheet of drawing-paper and a box of crayons, and for the sheer joy of the thing, he was making colored cubist messes while the others debated.

Said Gilda: "So, we shall have to house a floating summer population, and feed it and amuse it. Is it your idea to build a hostel?"

Maisie blurted a protest.

"Oh, not a hostel. One doesn't want—"

Jekyll nodded at her.

"Something more—adventurous. Cottages, camp—caravans."

"Why caravans, sir?"

"Sounds well. Borrowish, and all that."

"Color," said Jettison. "That's it. Splashes of color."

Gilda removed the ash from her cigarette.

"I think I see what is in our chief's mind. We cater for different temperaments and domestic situations. Families or the married in cottages, bachelors of both sexes under canvas—if they feel like it; the gypsy-minded in caravans. Besides, there is the question of outlay."

"What kind of cottage?"

Ann explained the idea.

"Quite little places—sitting-room, two bedrooms, small kitchen. Not all clumped together, but scattered about. Yes, we have considered the snags."

Stout reeled them off:

"Officialdom—Ministry of Health—local authorities—sanitation, water—Jacks in office."

Said Jekyll: "I happen to know a rather large Jack in office up in town. I shall consult him before we begin."

"If you have to pipe water and lay drains to scattered cottages, sir—"

"I know. We shall have to work that all out, and decide on ground that will lend itself to the idea. One might begin with a dozen cottages."

Derrek asked a question:

"Is the Sunflower to be a sort of central feeding-house?"

"Yes, for people who want meals—or some meals. Some of them will want to picnic. Lunches and suppers."

"I shall have to mug up catering."

"I dare say that Stout—"

"I'll teach you all you want to know about catering, D."

"Thanks, awfully. A cook, too."

Gilda smiled at him.

"Perhaps half a dozen cooks, my dear, if—"

"Great Scott, a sort of Café de Paris!"

"And dance-suppers."

Miss Nuthall had been waiting with a suggestion.

"Oughtn't some one to sell cigarettes?"

"That will be you, Freda!"

"Tobacconist's license."

"What fun!"

"I believe Gwen wants to run the smoke-shop."

"Shut up."

STOUT brought the discussion back to the large issue. "It's a world on wheels. Is it your idea, sir?"

Jekyll spoke slowly and deliberately:

"I know. I don't want Bluewater to be on wheels. I want it to be—on its feet, or lying on its back. People can come to it on wheels; but beyond our main road and the car-park, wheels will be barred. We will have a toll-gate. We will put a toll of ten shilling on the cars of all visitors who are not Anchor, or cottage, or camp or caravan. We want the people who want to be—people. If you get

what I mean, not mechanical things and afternoon squatters."

"The wind on the heath, brother!" said some one.

Jekyll laughed.

"No, not quite so bad as that! No uplift, no propaganda—just play, in the sea and out of it—looking at things, feeling things. It's rather difficult to express."

Gwen was watching his face. She nodded.

"I know just what Mr. Jekyll means. A place to—"

She met Derrek's eyes, and blushed.

Chapter Seventeen

A YEAR passed. One morning early in July, Jekyll in his blue and gold dressing-gown drove his wife down to bathe from the Sunflower. Other people were bathing from the Sunflower beach, tobogganing down the water-chute, using the high board, or playing with absurd rubber horses. It was a merry crowd, and pleasant in its play, and the Jekylls regarded it as their crowd. This early morning splashing-party in the sea was becoming part of Bluewater's day. Derrek served early tea to those who desired it. He was becoming a very busy young man, a colorful young man who was providing a hundred or so lunches a day, and giving a weekly dance with an orchestra hired from town.

Everybody bathed at this hour—those who had work to do, and those who had not: Gilda and the girls, the Jettisons, Selma and Aubrey. Sometimes Stout's people would come running along the beach to join the Sunflower crowd. Campers came down from the near-by hills, trailer and caravan folk from the valley, cottagers from Culverin Cove. To the Bluewater world Jekyll was known as the Rajah.

Coming to the surface after a dive, he found himself shaking his head almost in Gilda's face.

"Hallo. Good morning. How's sugar?"

She was treading water, arms extended, her fair hair piled under a blue cap.

"We'll have to open a butcher's shop."

"Terrible necessity. I say, it is rather amazing—but I believe the show is catching on."

She laughed.

"I should rather think it is."

Jekyll, Ann, Gilda, the girls, half a dozen young things, and a white-mustached veteran swam out to the raft. There was not room for everybody on the raft, so Jekyll and Ann cruised round. Maisie splashed her feet in the water. Gwen waved to Derrek. The veteran had managed to haul himself up next to Gilda.

He said: "I shall come here every year."

"Oh, do," said Gwen. "You run up such nice bills."

"Mercenary child."

"Ow!" shouted some one. "Don't tickle!"—and fell off the raft.

Jekyll and Ann swam back, with Bluewater burning in the summer sunlight. Some of Stout's people were surfing behind two motor-boats. Figures in bright-colored caps were descending the green slope above Culverin Cove. They saw June and Jimmy Jettison running to join them.

Said Jekyll: "Jimmy's getting fat. . . And is there anything in the rumor—"

Just gossip. She couldn't run like that."

Most intelligent of me."

the beach huts had been brought nearer the Sunflower; of the Sunflower nymphs brought the Jekylls their morning tea. Ann poured, and Jekyll, sitting on a lawn, watched the summer crowd. The horizon was lovely; the day promised to be hot.

"My dear, touch wood—but I do believe our show is going to be a success."

She looked at him as a woman can look at her own popular dog or child.

"Do you believe? Well, what more did you expect, J.? We have every cottage taken, and every room at the Sunflower; the Anchor full; twenty-three families in Caravan Valley, and thirty-four youngsters camping."

"Don't make it too good."

"What about your correspondence, my lamb?"

"It is enough to make an old sheep go native. I tell you what: we shall have to put up twenty more cottages, and add a few petals to the Sunflower this winter. Do you know that Gilda is making a profit?"

"And Selma, and Squirrel. Jimmy sold a picture yesterday."

"By Jove, I hadn't heard that. Who to?"

"The Mandarin in Sea Foam."

"Splendid. You know, kid, I rather thought this was going to be tremendous fun, but I didn't expect that the first season would show odds and ends of profit."

"But weren't you—a prophet?"

"Go along with you! We are still up to the neck in things. Do you know that a couple of years ago I had the wind up about money?"

"You had?"

"Sounds rather silly, doesn't it? Rich man's nerves. Used to worry like hell over my investments. Civilization going up the spout or down the drain! And then I go and plunge into an adventure like this!"

She refilled his teacup.

"You lamb! You're so much nicer, plunging. Men ought to. Sorry to be so—platitudinous and bright."

He laughed.

"I wonder if the old Greeks worried about the exchanges and the bank rate, and as to how the stuff was coming in from the Island Confederacy? Were there panics and public prayers on the Acropolis?"

"We have—reality here. People are loving the place—the right people."

That year gave Sussex a perfect summer; when Jekyll stood on the hill above the cove, he could see the Book of Mallison as amended by Jekyll, like an illuminated page shining in the sun. People were bathing; people were playing tennis on the two new hard courts and the two old ones. Against the dark firs of the hills, white tents stippled the hillside. Caravan Valley was full of the green tilts of the trailers and motor-caravans. A faint sound of laughter floated from the beach. People were passing in and out of Gilda's shop, where Ann's fruit and vegetables and eggs occupied one-half the building. Fruits of the earth! A Sunflower girl in a white frock was serving iced drinks to sun-bathers. Up in the Park, four elderly gentlemen were playing baby golf.

Bluewater wore a garland.

Stout was enjoying a record season.

A firm of publishers had accepted Derrek's novel.

Derrek and Gwen were engaged.

Jimmy had sold another picture, and was preparing for an autumn show.

Would-be gate-crashers were rare and unformidable.

Miss Nuthall had mishandled only one telegram.

J EKKYLL met smiling faces everywhere. Rather pleasant! They might call him the Rajah, even the Rajah of Beng; but they were glad to see him. He supposed that he could consider himself a popular managing director, yet had he used the word *popular* to unsentimental Ann, she would have corrected him. Popular, indeed! He was Bluewater's pet lamb, its utter gentleman, its uncle.

He was on his way now to relieve Derrek for the day. The question of reliefs had become a problem, for Derrek was on his feet at all hours; Gilda and the girls served from nine till seven, except on Sundays an early closing day. How quaint! Bluewater and Jekyll enjoyed an early closing day! He had instituted himself a relief, and in doing so and in fitting himself to be capable of relieving the others, he was learning a number of things: Why did people come in and buy two three-halfpenny postage stamps instead of purchasing a three-shilling book? Finance? He enjoyed his hours in the shops. He did not put on a white apron, but he wore a white tennis pull-over and white trousers.

"What can I get you, madam?"

It was a great game; and all these others, staff and guests, seemed to enjoy playing it with him. He played host at the Sunflower, and supervised the lunches. He would walk into Freda's and shoo her out.

"Now then, Squirrel, nuts! My show this afternoon."

Every day he made a tour of the whole estate. He chattered to the campers and the caravaners, and to the crowd on the Sunflower beach.

"Any complaints?"

"No, Mr. Jekyll."

"Anybody any suggestions to make?"

HE was always keen for suggestions. Could a bunker be placed at the seventh green? Certainly! The Moor Park course should be more subtle next year. Could Mr. Benson organize an American tournament? Of course. He inspected the car-park, and the garages, and the camp sanitation, and the new butcher's-shop. He interviewed would-be cottagers. He helped Ann to pick fruit. He had no leisure at all for dyspepsia or for philosophy. He went to bed tired, and got up with an appetite for the next day's adventure.

Bluewater's finance was becoming fascinating. He had expended some forty thousand pounds in purchasing, re-modelling and equipping the place, and the current expenses promised to total some four thousand pounds, and Bluewater and its attachments' yearly bill would be somewhere in the neighborhood of six thousand pounds. What was Bluewater likely to give him in the way of returns?

Ten cottages let furnished, at two guineas a week. Take an average of twenty weeks.....	420.0.0.
Average profits—at Bluewater Shop—as estimated by Gilda after two months' trading.	
Five pounds a week, twenty weeks.....	100.0.0.
Sunflower profits, possibly ten pounds a week, twenty weeks	200.0.0.
Ann's estimate of her profits on eggs, birds, fruit and vegetables.....	?
Camping fees, 2/6 per person a week.....	125.0.0. ?
Caravan fees, 10/6 per caravan.....	25.0.0. ?
Game fees.....	50.0.0. ?
Library and bric-a-brac profits.....	20.0.0. ?
Tobacco shop	25.0.0. ?
Garage fees.....	50.0.0. ?
Parking fees.....	50.0.0. ?
Tolls	25.0.0. ?
Possible and probable profits.....	670.0.0.

And his private expenses totaled about three thousand pounds a year!

He had queried all these items, but when figures were produced at one of their board-meetings, Stout appeared gently amused by Jekyll's estimates.

"I think we are going to do better than that, sir, especially if you increase the cottage accommodation. I see you have estimated the Sunflower profits at two hundred."

"I try to be conservative, Stout."

"Have you seen Derrek's figures for August?"

"Not completely."

"He's been keeping them up his sleeve, I think. Report, Mr. Secretary."

"We've made a profit of over a hundred and fifty in August."

"Extraordinary!" said Jekyll.

"Well, I've served over fifteen hundred lunches, sir, and over a thousand suppers. Then there was a profit on the pension terms for the residents. And a profit on the lunches. Then, casual drinks and teas, and early teas."

Jekyll looked pleased.

"We are rearing a wonderful baby."

"I think Gilda has been keeping things dark. Own up, Gilda."

"August profits roughly fifty-seven pounds."

"Besides, next year, when we really get going—"

Jekyll laughed.

"Don't tell me that beauty and peace are going to pay!"

"I'll bet you a—"

"Case of fireworks, Stout."

"All right, a case of fireworks, sir—that in a couple of years we may balance things, and begin to show a profit."

"Pay dividends on our shares, what? Income tax, and surtax, my dear chap! And they'll put up our assessments."

"We ought to do it. I've talked to dozens of the people here. It's not a mere stunt. I believe next year we could treble our takings, if we had the room."

Jekyll looked at his wife.

"Hypothetical profits! Ann and I don't wish to work for a profit. If there ever should be a profit, I suppose we could distribute it in bonuses?"

"Very generous, sir, but—"

"We're getting an amazing amount of fun out of this place. It's cured my indigestion. Don't put that down in the minutes, Derrek."

"No sir."

"Besides, Stout, you're not making a penny out of the Bluewater Company."

"I'm making more than a penny at my hotel. Your show seems to help my show, sir. I've no grouse."

Their chairman looked at the faces of his fellow-directors.

"Has anybody a grouse? You see, I—"

Gilda gave him her Mona Lisa smile.

"I can't say that I have heard anybody grouching. If I do—"

"Yes, please report."

"No. If I do, I'll hand them over to some of our young things—for treatment."

THE Jekylls were going down to the Sunflower to dine and dance.

Ann had put on a new frock, one of those simple yet seductive sheaths that pleased both herself and her husband. As she came down the stairs, she had a glimpse through a Georgian window of the sun setting over the sea. Jekyll was waiting for her in the library, and as she crossed the hall, she saw him sitting at his desk, black dinner-jacket, white collar, sleek black head very vivacious against the green and gold of the grass and the trees.

And suddenly he put his head and shoulders back and laughed, spontaneous, irresponsible laughter, no mere cynical cackle, but a jocund, rolling sound. It infected her. She too wanted to laugh—but at what?

"Merry, J.?"

"Hallo."

"What's the joke?"

"Come and look."

She bent over him, her hands on his shoulders.

"No, I won't spoil your hair. What's the funny book?"

He drew her hands down.

"One of my philosophical sages. I dragged him out into the light, while you were putting the final touches. My God, but the fellow is funny."

She read: "There are twenty-seven Categories of Explanation. (1). That the actual world is a process, and that the process is the becoming of actual entities. Thus actual entities are creatures; they are also termed 'actual occasions.'"

She too laughed.

"What on earth does it mean? Am I an actual occasion?"

"I think I'll call you a categorical imperative. But what solemn and pompous balderdash most of it is! I used to live with fellows like this, and take 'em seriously. Come along, Mrs. Categorical Imperative, let's go and dance."

BACKWARDS.... Backwards.... Everything backwards: Book-shelves and clothes, furniture and shoes. It took the murder-wise brains of Ellery Queen to evolve such a plot! You may have thought that "The Siamese Twins Mystery" was Mr. Queen's masterpiece, but wait till you read "The Chinese Orange Murder" in our next issue—a complete book-length (over 50,000 words) novel printed by us, before its appearance in \$2.00 book form, in the June Redbook.

9

The Madness of Martin Gould

How he speculated in "souls"—and made a profit

By WARWICK DEEPING

HE was a little man with the gentle head of a brown spaniel, save that his hair had gone grey in the last six months. For twenty years he had been a cloth merchant somewhere in the City, but as a business-man he had never been very successful, for he had been unable to take advantage of other men. Early in the year his wife had died, and her death seemed to have broken his heart. The Goulds had no children, and had lived a quiet, gentle, pottering life of their own in a little house at Putney. After his wife's death Gould sold the house and his business, and hid himself away in a Kensington boarding-house. There he fell ill, or, rather, he ceased to be actively alive. The doctors called it melancholia, and they sent him to a nursing-home.

He gave no trouble. He would lie for hours with his eyes closed. Always on the table beside his bed stood a photograph of his dead wife.

Sometimes he would sit up, leaning against the pillows, with all the appearance of a man listening attentively for a voice or a sound from some other world. He would smile. His short-sighted blue eyes looked through the wall and beyond it into far distances.

"Nurse," he would say, "it is coming nearer. I can almost hear it."

His nurse, a practical young woman, approved of him because he was so gentle and clean, and because he gave no trouble. She thought him a dear old thing, but quite mad.

"What are you going to hear, Mr. Gould?"

"Her voice—my wife's voice."

He announced it with an air of confident simplicity.

"She has something to say to me, you know. I am waiting to hear what it is."

The nurse humoured him as she would have humoured a lovable and well-behaved child.

"I am sure it will be very interesting, Mr. Gould. Now, it is time for your medicine."

He did not need the medicine, and he knew it, but he accepted it, for he had never been an argumentative man, and he hated giving trouble.

A week or so later, when Nurse Herkomer was on night duty, she looked, about eleven o'clock, into Mr. Martin Gould's room to see that he was safe and asleep. It was a clear, cold night in May, one of those nights when the sky retains a suggestion of blueness and the stars are very brilliant. She was surprised to find the blind up, and the spare figure of Martin Gould in its striped pyjamas sitting up very erect in bed.

"Mr. Gould, you ought to be asleep."

He made a movement of the hand, as though appealing for silence.

"Nurse, I have heard it. She has been speaking to me."

Nurse Herkomer could see him quite clearly, with surprising clearness, and she told herself that the moon must be shining. His hair looked like silver wire, the hair of a mad saint. She humoured him.

"Indeed, Mr. Gould! And what did she say to you?"

"Why does not anybody tell them the truth?"

"And who may 'them' be?"

"Every man and every woman."

"And what is the truth?"

"Nurse, that we have souls."

She made a movement as though to pull down the blind.

"Please," he said, "I like it like that."

She was standing at the foot of the bed, and, matter of fact young woman that she was, she could not help being struck by the queer shine of his face. It was luminous, luminous with happiness—a kind of triumphant serenity.

"Just as you like, Mr. Gould. I want you to sleep."

"All the world is asleep, nurse," he said.

The Madness of Martin Gould

"She has told me to go and wake it."

"But it wants to sleep, Mr. Gould."

"Of course. She knows that; she knows everything. She will go on talking to me presently."

"That's right. I dare say she will tell you that you must go to sleep. She wants you to get well."

"Nurse, I—am—well," he said.

She did not think much of it at the time, but she remembered those last words of his when they discovered at six o'clock next morning that Mr. Gould had disappeared. But he had disappeared methodically, courteously, and with every evidence of complete sanity. He must have got up very early and dressed himself and slipped silently out of the house. He left letters for the matron, the doctor and Nurse Herkomer. Very gentle and sane letters, in which he thanked them for their kindness and declared that the fog had lifted and that he was quite well. He also left behind three cheques.

THERE was a consultation between the doctor and the women, and Nurse Herkomer repeated the conversation of the previous night.

"Of course, I could certify him," said the doctor, "but he seems the most harmless odd thing. You say that he looked happy?"

"Extraordinarily happy."

"Why shouldn't one let well alone?"

"I think we ought to notify the police," said the matron. "He does not seem to have any relatives."

"Oh, no, not the police," said the doctor. "Anyhow, not yet. Let him have a run for his money. The law sometimes has such a kind yet clumsy hand."

Mr. Gould's suitcase was sent to his last address, the boarding-house in Kensington, and the doctor, calling there, found that his patient had dropped in there for an hour, collected the rest of his belongings, and explained that he was going away. From that moment he disappeared. He was traced to his bank in the City, where he called on the manager, who was an old acquaintance of his, and drew some fifty pounds in notes.

"I am going away, Smith, but I shall come back for more money some day. All my dividends are paid in to you."

The bank manager described him as looking particularly cheerful, like a man starting off on a holiday.

"Nothing suicidal, doctor, in the look of him. Laughed and talked about his wife."

The doctor left it at that.

Now, it is conceivable that in any other country or in some previous century, the madness of Mr. Gould might not have been taken for madness, and that he might have been listened to with kindly amusement, even with respect. But when the chief occupation of a country is that of buying and selling, or of exploiting somebody else, such superfluous nonsense as the possession of a soul cannot be treated seriously. The price of Souls is not quoted in the Stock Exchange list, nor is there any man named Soul figuring in the football news. Mr. Gould should have known this; he had known it, but then something had happened to him, and he had got outside the machine.

But when an elderly gentleman in a morning coat, black-and-white-striped trousers, and a black bowler hat, takes up a position in one of the bays of Waterloo Bridge at half-past eight in the morning and proceeds to remind the hurrying office and shopward crowd that each typist and clerk and waitress has a soul, he is either ignored or moved on by the police. In Mr. Gould's case both things happened. The procession of profiles went by him bored, intent, still digesting a scrambled breakfast and the scrambled eggs of the morning paper. Sometimes a passer-by would throw a half-derisive or curious glance at the crank or lunatic. An occasional girl giggled. He might as well have stood there and tossed stones or oyster-shells into the river. But on the third morning he had the misfortune to attract a small crowd, which was made up of two loafers and a dozen urchins. There was some obstruction of the pavement, and the police intervened.

The constable was quite young, and good-temperedly didactic. He had the blue eye which can never be surprised—the blue eye of a man who has an answer to everything.

"Move on, please. I've been watching you two mornings. You can't do that here."

"But I'm not doing any harm," said Mr. Gould. "I'm trying to do good."

"You are obstructing the traffic. A footpath is made to be walked on."

"Yes, I know that, officer, but that's just the trouble. The earth is becoming a footpath; everybody has to keep moving; no one is allowed to stand still and think."

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By Warwick Deeping

The constable looked at him tolerantly. It was impossible to feel truculent towards Mr. Gould.

"I can't argue that with you, sir. We have to get our day's work done."

"But isn't there anything else? I'm telling people to remember that we have souls."

"Well, you can't tell them that here, sir. I shall have to charge you if you persist in creating an obstruction. Now then, you kids, clear off."

Mr. Gould proceeded to obey.

"Try the Park," said the constable. "We—allow some of them to let off a little steam there."

Mr. Gould made trial of the Park at the time when earnest men explain how and why the existing scheme of things should be turned inside out or upside down. He established himself a little apart, and at one time he had an audience of ten, in spite of the propinquity of a vigorous political meeting. He tried to explain to these people in his gentle voice what the other voice bade him say to them, that unless a man has a light lit inside him his world is in darkness, that it does not profit men to gain the whole world and lose their own souls.

These ten or so odd people attended to him much as they would have attended to a Punch and Judy show. No one appeared moved by what he said until a fiercely grieved-looking man with black kinky hair and an everted lower lip happened to be attracted to the group by some chance word of Mr. Gould's.

A moment later Mr. Gould found himself attacked with passion and with fierceness.

"Who pays you for it? That's what I want to know. Who pays you to come here and serve up all the old dope stuff?"

"I'm not paid for it," said Martin Gould.

"Rot!" roared the fierce man. "You're one of the old cheating gang with God in the managing director's chair. Teaching the fools to make the best of the next world, while you get the whole of this!"

"I don't, my friend. I am trying to help people to be happy."

"What for?"

"Because I'm happy."

"Yes, you look it; got a nice fat little nest-egg put by. We don't want to hear about the next world. We're concentrating on this world, and we're going to have it. We're awake—now."

Mr. Gould nodded his head.

"Yes, your stomach is awake, I think, but however much you fill it——"

The fierce person made some very offensive retort, and Mr. Gould's audience sniggered and deliquesced. He was left standing there with a feeling of vacancy, of bafflement, of pity. The fierce person was so much to be pitied, more so than the bored people who asked only to be amused.

"How is it I can't grip them," he thought, "even when that voice tells me what to say? How is it that this noisy fellow next door has hundreds round him?"

He became a part of the adjacent crowd; he listened. The speaker was passionate, truculent, obviously sincere, and yet it seemed to Mr. Gould that all his talk was of material things. Some people had all the money. Mr. Gould heard much about houses, public service, slums, food, wages, slavery, the hours of slavery, parasites, the redistribution of commodities. The crowd was interested, absorbed. He watched the faces round him.

"It's all an appeal to the stomach in man," he reflected, "and it gets them."

He felt saddened. He wandered away and down to the Serpentine, and sitting on a seat, he watched the water, and the birds and the children at play.

"Extraordinary!" he said to himself. "Extraordinary!"

For it was extraordinary that the world should be for ever failing to learn that a surfeit of physical things does not make men happy.

"It is because the majority have not experienced it," he thought, "that those false prophets up there are able to delude them. They tell a man that if he has a fine house, unlimited food, plenty of clothes and very little work, he is going to be happy for ever and ever. As though life could be an eternal bank holiday at Southend or Blackpool!"

He nodded his head.

"But it is damnable—it is blasphemy to teach them that. It's not true. And when you try to tell them it is not true, they gnash their teeth at you and call you a hired dope merchant."

¶

HE wandered home to his solitary room in a Kensington lodging-house and ate his supper, which consisted of Dutch cheese,

The Madness of Martin Gould

bread and water. He was glad of his outwardly poor room and supper, not self-righteously so, but because they made him feel consistent. They put him peacefully beyond the gibes of the fierce person. And as the darkness fell he sat at the open window and listened to the voice. It talked to him regularly now. It was the voice of supreme love and supreme wisdom. It filled him with spiritual food, this voice of the woman whom he had loved, and who had been his life's comrade.

The voice told him to persevere, and his perseverance came near involving him in awkward adventures. He was unlearned in mob psychology, and he had not the savoury meat to offer which the crowd desired. He tried to spread his message in other ways, making pilgrimages through the streets, smiling into people's faces and offering them his gentle wisdom.

"Do not make money your god."

One deaf lady, addressed outside a jeweller's in Piccadilly, flared in his face and threatened to give him in charge. In fact she looked about for a constable, but fortunately for Mr. Gould, she did not see one.

ON one wet night, in a turning off Shaftesbury Avenue, he spoke to a passing figure which brushed close to him.

"Remember—you have a soul."

She turned on him like a fury. He saw her bleached face in the dim light.

"None of your godly sauce! I'm what you—made me, but I'm not taking it lying down."

She slapped his face. There was no one about, and she shut him off in a doorway. Martin Gould was shocked, for he understood that he had hurt her.

"I'm sorry," he said, "but I meant it. I'm not a pious man, but we both have hearts, my dear."

She put her face close to his.

"What's the matter with you, old sport? What is it you're playing at?"

"I'm trying to make people happier."

There was something in his voice that touched her. She drew away with a twitch of the shoulders.

"Good Lord! You funny old bloke! Sorry I smacked you. Good night."

"Good night, child," said Martin Gould.

But London continued to baffle him, for no one had the time or the desire to listen

to his voice, and one day in June he was moved to go down into the country. He packed a handbag and walked to Waterloo. His idea was to travel twenty miles by train and then take to the high road and his own feet. He got out at Weybridge. He found himself wandering across the heath between the station and the village, and at the bottom of the heath he came upon a number of children playing in a rather frowsy patch of sand, rubbish and old tin cans.

"Ha, children!" thought Martin Gould.

Had he not forgotten the children? Should not any scheme of betterment begin with the children? "Suffer little children to come unto Me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

He approached them.

"Well, my dears, what's the game you are playing?"

They were not nice children. They seemed to see something ridiculous in the figure of Mr. Gould. They had hard eyes and hard faces, and they were rude to him. In fact they were more than rude, they mocked him and threw sand. They called him an old sheep's head.

"Someone has forgotten to teach you manners," he said.

A very dirty small boy stared him in the face.

"'Ere," he said truculently, "we don't take sauce from toffs these days. We're as good as you, and a bit better. My dad could punch your 'ead off."

Mr. Gould smiled.

"I dare say he could, son, but a donkey can kick harder than your dad can hit."

But he was depressed. He wandered through the village down to the Thames, and there by the flickering water and amid the greenness he sat down on the bank and took a packet of sandwiches from his bag. He could hear the roar of the sluices, the wind in the poplars, the voices on the river. Swans glided up, and he fed them with pieces of bread.

"Hate, too much hate, everywhere," he reflected. "Hatred, suspicion and greed. I don't seem to speak the right language—somehow."

He was troubled. He began to wonder whether he was going to fail the voice, to prove a broken instrument, useless and ineffectual. Not for one moment did he doubt the voice or the words that the voice spoke to him. His rendering of the message seemed wrong. Why was it wrong? Why did he fail?

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By Warwick Deeping

"It cannot be in them," he thought with characteristic gentleness; "it must be in me. Now, if I could succeed just once, make one man or woman happy, help some lost soul back to the higher path."

He looked at the swans.

"They come to me—yes, for food. The eternal stomach! But do not men hunger for spiritual food, or has the world lost its appetite for God?"

He sat and meditated.

"I must persevere," he said to himself.

"I must not fail the voice, her voice."

MARTIN GOULD travelled very many miles before he happened upon a particular cottage in which two people were losing the one thing which makes life worth living. He happened on it quite by accident; he had had many failures upon the road, rebuffs, ridicule. He was learning other truths, that one should not throw pearls before swine, and that souls which are not ripe cannot accept ripe wisdom.

"Perhaps the voice is for the few," he reflected—"the few who are ripe to hear it. I will not cheapen the voice or dishonour it. Hell is man's own obstinate selfishness."

It was early in the afternoon, and he had sat down under a hedge to rest. The ground was high and rolling, and the sea lay below him, and the sky blue above. There was a garden on the other side of the hedge, and beyond the garden a cottage, one of those very new red-and-white buildings in which you find some ex-soldier trying to live on the land. The cottage was the vital centre of a small holding, a field full of chickens, a very young orchard, and another field full of vegetables. Everything was rather thin, and suggestive of a struggle.

Mr. Gould was eating his lunch when he heard the two voices.

"Don't, Hal, don't!" said the girl's.

"Isn't it the same for me as for you?"

"I'm hanged if it is," said the man's.

"Cabbages—after leading men! I'm going down to Flexhill."

"The last time you went there— Don't go, Hal, we can't afford it."

"Look here, Bess, I'm not going to be bossed. I want some fun. I'm bored."

"What fun do I get? I'm quite ready to work and pinch here in order to make good."

"You're mean," he said. "All women are mean."

Mr. Gould heard her utter an angry and protesting cry. The man came down the path, flung the gate open and banged it after him, but he did not see Mr. Gould because he turned the other way, and Mr. Gould had shrunk into the hedge. He was a tall young man, and he was still wearing out a pair of army riding-breeches.

Mr. Gould heard the girl come to the gate. She broke into tears.

"Who would have thought," she said aloud, "a year ago! I've tried so hard. I'd go on trying, only he won't help. He's bored, and I love him."

She went back to the cottage, and Mr. Gould got up very quickly and set out to follow the man down to Flexhill. He walked so fast that he had him in sight before he reached the end of the lane, and he did not lose him all that afternoon.

The man went to The Flexhill Arms and had a drink. He was a pleasant, brown-faced lad, but he looked sullen and unhappy. The two selves in him had been fighting, and for the moment the bad self had won. From The Flexhill Arms he wandered rather aimlessly along the sea front, but he did not look at the holiday young women who might have represented his idea of fun. He walked to the end of the parade and away from it over the shingle. He sat down and began to toss stones into the sea.

Martin Gould crunched gently over the shingle, and sat down within two yards of him. The young man gave him an angry look and continued to throw stones into the sea. What did the old fool want to come and sit down here for?

"It's so easy," said Mr. Gould gently, "just as easy as that."

"I beg your pardon," snapped the young man.

"I said that it is just as easy as that."

"What is?"

"Throwing away somebody else's happiness."

The inward part of the young man seemed to give a start, though he answered Mr. Gould with a defiant look.

"Is it?" he said. "But what the devil has that to do with you?"

Mr. Gould smiled at him.

"Nothing—nothing at all. But why throw away the only thing that is worth having?"

The man turned on him fiercely.

"What do you mean?"

The Madness of Martin Gould

"I mean that if you throw away somebody else's happiness you will lose your own."

They talked for two hours, after Mr. Gould had confessed to the young man what he had heard and seen.

"Say, will you come back with me?"

"I'll come as far as the gate."

Mr. Gould went as far as the gate, and though he refused to enter, he stood there and listened. He heard a girl cry out, and there was the gladness of a surprised love in that cry.

"Oh, Hal!"

What the man said Mr. Gould could not hear, and he guessed that it was too sacred for him to hear, for the two voices had a murmuring tenderness.

"You'll try and forgive me for being a damned selfish fool, Bess?"

"Dear man," she answered, "I think I can forgive you anything so long as you go on loving me."

"Why—that's what the old chap said! I'll bring him in. May I?"

"I'll come with you."

Mr. Gould was caught sneaking off with a happy smile on his face. He was taken prisoner and carried into the cottage.

"You'll come and see us sometimes?" said the man when Martin Gould insisted that he must go.

"Of course I will. God bless you both."

And for him that was but the beginning, a realization of life's possibilities and its

limitations. The voice had been with him all these months and it was with him still, and more strongly and dearly than ever, but he had learned to become the voice's instrument. He was not a great orator or a great writer; he had not the magnetic exuberance which delights the crowd; he was just an obscure little old man filled with the eternal wisdom and the happiness which follows that wisdom like its shadow.

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He returned to his South London lodging-house, and he lived there for many years, becoming a familiar figure in certain ugly streets, an old man whose face was beautiful because it was happy. He had many friends, chiefly among the sick and the unfortunate. He was known to many of the doctors. But when the malady was spiritual and beyond the power of the physician to heal, people would send for old Martin Gould. He had a voice that healed.

Some thick-headed pusher of a barrow, happening to speak of him irreverently to a worried woman who was the mother of seven children, was caught in a whirlwind of cockney wrath.

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By
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STORY TELLER

MARCH 1923

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The Madness of Martin Gould

By Warwick Deeping

"As the darkness fell he sat at the open window and listened to the voice. It talked to him regularly now. It was the voice of supreme love and supreme wisdom. . . . this voice of the woman whom he had loved, and who had been his life's comrade."



HE was a little man with the gentle head of a brown spaniel, save that his hair had gone grey in the last six months. For twenty years he had been a cloth merchant somewhere in the City, but as a business man he had never been very successful, for he had been unable to take advantage of other men. Early in the year his wife had died, and her death seemed to have broken his heart. The Goulds had no children, and had lived a quiet, gentle, pottering life of their own in a little house at Putney. After his wife's death Gould sold the house and his business, and hid himself away in a Kensington boarding-house. There he fell ill, or, rather, he ceased to be actively alive. The doctors called it melancholia, and they sent him to a nursing home.

He gave no trouble. He would lie for hours with his eyes closed. Always on the table beside his bed stood a photograph of his dead wife.

Sometimes he would sit up, leaning against the pillows, with all the appearance of a man listening attentively for a voice or a sound from some other world. He would smile. His short-sighted blue eyes looked through the wall and beyond it into far distances.

"Nurse," he would say, "it is coming nearer. I can almost hear it."

His nurse, a practical young woman, approved of him because he was so gentle and clean, and because he gave no trouble. She thought him a dear old thing, but quite mad.

"What are you going to hear, Mr. Gould?"

"Her voice, my wife's voice."

He announced it with an air of confident simplicity.

"She has something to say to me, you know. I am waiting to hear what it is."

The nurse humoured him as she would have humoured a lovable and well-behaved child.

"I am sure it will be very interesting, Mr. Gould. Now, it is time for your medicine."

He did not need the medicine, and he knew it, but he accepted it, for he had never been an argumentative man and he hated giving trouble.

A week or so later when Nurse Herkomer was on night duty she looked about eleven o'clock into Mr. Martin Gould's room to see that he was safe and asleep. It was a clear, cold night in May, one of those nights when the sky retains a suggestion of blueness and the stars are very brilliant. She was surprised to find the blind up, and the spare figure of Martin Gould in its striped pyjamas sitting up very erect in bed.

"Mr. Gould, you ought to be asleep."

He made a movement of the hand as though appealing for silence.

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Nurse Herkomer could see him quite clearly, with surprising clearness, and she told herself that the moon must be shining. His hair looked like silver wire, the hair of a mad saint. She humoured him.

"Indeed, Mr. Gould! And what did she say to you?"

"Why does not anybody tell them the truth?"

"And who may 'them' be?"

"Every man and every woman."

"And what is the truth?"

"Nurse, that we have souls."

She made a movement as though to pull down the blind.

"Please," he said, "I like it like that."

She was standing at the foot of the bed, and, matter of fact young woman that she was, she could not help being struck by the queer shine of his face. It was luminous, luminous with happiness—a kind of triumphant serenity.

"Just as you like, Mr. Gould. I want you to sleep."

"All the world is asleep, nurse," he said; "she has told me to go and wake it."

"But it wants to sleep, Mr. Gould."

"Of course. She knows that; she knows everything. She will go on talking to me presently."

"That's right. I dare say she will tell you that you must go to sleep. She wants you to get well."

"Nurse, I—am—well," he said.

She did not think much of it at the time, but she remembered those last words of his when they discovered at six o'clock next morning that Mr. Gould had disappeared. But he had disappeared methodically, courteously, and with every evidence of complete sanity. He must have got up very early and dressed himself and slipped silently out of the house. He left letters for the matron, the doctor and Nurse Herkomer. Very gentle and sane letters in which he thanked them for their kindness and declared that the fog had lifted and that he was quite well. He also left three cheques.

The thing which particularly surprised them was that he had not taken Mrs. Gould's photograph; it was as though he no longer needed it.

There was a consultation between the doctor and the women, and Nurse Herkomer repeated the conversation of the previous night.

"Of course, I could certify him," said the doctor, "but he seems the most harmless old thing. You say that he looked happy?"

"Extraordinarily happy."

"Why shouldn't one let well alone?"

"I think we ought to notify the police," said the matron. "He does not seem to have any relatives."

"Oh, no, not the police," said the doctor. "Anyhow, not yet. Let him have a run for his money. The law sometimes has such a kind yet clumsy hand."

Mr. Gould's suit-case was sent to his last address, the boarding-house in Kensington, and the doctor calling there found that his patient had dropped in there for an hour, collected the rest of his belongings and explained that he was going away. From that moment he disappeared. He was traced to his bank in the City, where he called on the manager, who was an old acquaintance of his, and drew some fifty pounds in notes.

"I am going away, Smith, but I shall come back for more money some day. All my dividends are paid in to you."

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Now, it is conceivable that in any other country or in some previous century the madness of Mr. Gould might not have been taken for madness, and that he might have been listened to with kindly amusement, even with respect. But

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when the chief occupation of a country is that of buying and selling, or of exploiting somebody else, such superfluous nonsense as the possession of a soul cannot be treated seriously. The price of Souls is not quoted in the Stock Exchange list, nor is there any man named Soul figuring in the football news. Mr. Gould should have known this; he had known it, but then something had happened to him and he had got outside the machine.

But when an elderly gentleman in a morning coat, black-and-white-striped trousers and a black bowler hat takes up a position in one of the bays of Waterloo Bridge at half-past eight in the morning and proceeds to remind the hurrying office and shopward crowd that each typist and clerk and waitress has a soul, he is either ignored or moved on by the police. In Mr. Gould's case both things happened. The procession of profiles went by him bored, intent, still digesting a scrambled breakfast and the scrambled eggs of the morning paper. Sometimes a passer-by would throw a half-derisive or curious glance at the crank or lunatic. An occasional girl giggled. Mr. Gould had no beard, and was useless even as a beaver. He might as well have stood there and tossed stones or oyster shells into the river. But on the third morning he had the misfortune to attract a small crowd which was made up of two loafers and a dozen urchins. There was some obstruction of the pavement, and the police intervened.

The constable was quite young, and good-temperedly didactic. He had the blue eye which can never be surprised—the blue eye of a man who has an answer to everything.

"Move on, please. I've been watching you two mornings. You can't do that here."

"But I'm not doing any harm," said Mr. Gould. "I'm trying to do good."

"You are obstructing the traffic.

A footpath is made to be walked on."

"Yes, I know that, officer, but that's just the trouble. The earth is becoming a footpath; everybody has to keep moving; no one is allowed to stand still and think."

The constable looked at him tolerantly. It was impossible to feel truculent towards Mr. Gould.

"I can't argue that with you, sir. We have to get our day's work done."

"But isn't there anything else? I'm telling people to remember that we have souls."

"Well, you can't tell them that here, sir. I shall have to charge you if you persist in creating an obstruction. Now then, you kids, clear off."

Mr. Gould proceeded to obey.

"Try the park," said the constable. "We—allow some of them to let off a little steam there."

Mr. Gould made trial of the park at the time when earnest men explain how and why the existing scheme of things should be turned inside out or upside down. He established himself a little apart, and at one time he had an audience of ten, in spite of the propinquity of a vigorous Socialist meeting. He tried to explain to these people in his gentle voice what the other voice bade him say to them, that unless a man has a light lit inside him his world is in darkness, that it does not profit men to gain the whole world and lose their own souls.

These ten or so odd people attended to him much as they would have attended to a Punch and Judy show. No one appeared moved by what he said until a fiercely grieved looking man with black kinky hair and an everted lower lip happened to be attracted to the group by some chance word of Mr. Gould's.

A moment later Mr. Gould found himself attacked with passion and with fierceness.

"Who pays you for it? That's what I want to know. Who pays

you to come here and serve up all the old dope stuff?"

"I'm not paid for it," said Martin Gould.

"Rot!" roared the fierce man. "You're one of the old cheating gang with God in the managing director's chair. Teaching the fools to make the best of the next world, while you get the whole of this?"

"I don't, my friend. I am trying to help people to be happy."

"What for?"

"Because I'm happy."

"Yes, you look it; got a nice fat little nest-egg put by. We don't want to hear about the next world. We're concentrating on this world, and we're going to have it. We're awake—now."

Mr. Gould nodded his head.

"Yes, your stomach is awake, I think, but however much you fill it—"

The fierce person made some very offensive retort, and Mr. Gould's audience sniggered and deliquesced. He was left standing there with a feeling of vacancy, of bafflement, of pity. The fierce person was so much to be pitied, more so than the bored people who asked only to be amused.

"How is it I can't grip them," he thought, "even when that voice tells me what to say? How is it that this noisy fellow next door has hundreds round him?"

He became a part of the adjacent crowd; he listened. The speaker was passionate, truculent, obviously sincere, and yet it seemed to Mr. Gould that all his talk was of material things. Some people had all the money. Mr. Gould heard much about houses, public service, slums, food, wages, slavery, the hours of slavery, parasites, the redistribution of commodities. The crowd was interested, absorbed. He watched the faces round him.

"It's all an appeal to the stomach in man," he reflected, "and it gets them."

He felt saddened. He wandered away and down to the Serpentine, and sitting on a seat he watched

the water, and the birds and the children at play.

"Extraordinary!" he said to himself. "Extraordinary!"

For it was extraordinary that the world should be for ever failing to learn that a surfeit of physical things does not make men happy.

"It is because the majority have not experienced it," he thought, "that those false prophets up there are able to delude them. They tell a man that if he has a fine house, unlimited food, plenty of clothes and very little work he is going to be happy for ever and ever. As though life could be an eternal bank holiday at Southend or Blackpool!"

He nodded his head.

"But it is damnable — it is blasphemy to teach them that. It's not true. And when you try to tell them it is not true they gnash their teeth at you and call you a hired dope merchant."

He wandered home to his solitary room in a Kensington lodging-house and ate his supper, which consisted of Dutch cheese, bread and water. He was glad of his outwardly poor room and supper, not self-righteously so, but because they made him feel consistent. They put him peacefully beyond the gibes of the fierce person. And as the darkness fell he sat at the open window and listened to the voice. It talked to him regularly now. It was the voice of supreme love and supreme wisdom. It filled him with spiritual food, this voice of the woman whom he had loved, and who had been his life's comrade.

The voice told him to persevere, and his perseverance came near involving him in awkward adventures. He was unlearned in mob psychology, and he had not the savoury meat to offer which the crowd desired. He tried to spread his message in other ways, making pilgrimages through the streets, smiling into people's faces and offering them his gentle wisdom.

"Do not make money your god."

One deaf lady, addressed outside

The Madness of Martin Gould

a jeweller's in Piccadilly, flared in his face and threatened to give him in charge. In fact she looked about for a constable, but fortunately for Mr. Gould she did not see one. But she called him a wicked old reprobate.

On one wet night, in a turning off Shaftesbury Avenue, he spoke to a passing figure which brushed close to him.

"Remember—you have a soul."

She turned on him like a fury. He saw her bleached face in the dim light.

"None of your godly sauce! I'm what you—made me, but I'm not taking it lying down."

She slapped his face. There was no one about and she shut him off in a doorway. Martin Gould was shocked, for he understood that he had hurt her.

"I'm sorry," he said, "but I meant it. I'm not a pious man, but we both have hearts, my dear."

She put her face close to his.

"What's the matter with you, old sport? What is it you're playing at?"

"I'm trying to make people happier," he said.

There was something in his voice that touched her. She drew away with a twitch of the shoulders.

"Good Lord! You funny old bloke! Sorry I smacked you. Good night."

"Good night, child," said Martin Gould.

But London continued to baffle him, for no one had the time or the desire to listen to his voice, and one day in June he was moved to go down into the country. He packed a handbag and walked to Waterloo. His idea was to travel twenty miles by train and then take to the high road and his own feet. He got out at Weybridge. He found himself wandering across the heath between the station and the village, and at the bottom of the heath he came upon a number of children playing in a rather frowsy patch of sand, rubbish and old tin cans.

"Ha, children!" thought Martin Gould.

Had he not forgotten the children? Should not any scheme of betterment begin with the children? "Suffer little children to come unto Me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

He approached them.

"Well, my dears, what's the game you are playing?"

They were not nice children. They seemed to see something ridiculous in the figure of Mr. Gould. They had hard eyes and hard faces, and they were rude to him. In fact they were more than rude, they mocked him and threw sand. They called him an old sheep's head.

"Someone has forgotten to teach you manners," he said.

A very dirty small boy stared him in the face.

"'Ere," he said truculently, "we don't take sauce from toffs these days. We're as good as you, and a bit better. My dad could punch your 'ead off."

Mr. Gould smiled.

"I dare say he could, son, but a donkey can kick harder than your dad can hit."

But he was depressed. He wandered through the village down to the Thames, and there by the flickering water and amid the greenness he sat down on the bank and took a packet of sandwiches from his bag. He could hear the roar of the sluices, the wind in the poplars, the voices on the river. Swans glided up and he fed them with pieces of bread.

"Hate, too much hate everywhere," he reflected. "Hatred, suspicion and greed. I don't seem to speak the right language—somehow."

He was troubled. He began to wonder whether he was going to fail the voice, to prove a broken instrument, useless and ineffectual. Not for one moment did he doubt the voice or the words that the voice spoke to him. His rendering of the

By Warwick Deeping

message seemed wrong. Why was it wrong? Why did he fail?

"It cannot be in them," he thought with characteristic gentleness; "it must be in me. Now, if I could succeed just once, make one man or woman happy, help some lost soul back to the higher path."

He looked at the swans.

"They come to me—yes, for food. The eternal stomach! But do not men hunger for spiritual food, or has the world lost its appetite for God?"

He sat and meditated.

"I must persevere," he said to himself. "I must not fail the voice, her voice."

Martin Gould travelled very many miles before he happened upon a particular cottage in which two people were losing the one thing which makes life worth living. He happened on it quite by accident; he had had many failures upon the road, rebuffs, ridicule. He was learning other truths, that one should not throw pearls before swine, and that souls which are not ripe cannot accept ripe wisdom.

"Perhaps the voice is for the few," he reflected; "the few who are ripe to hear it. I will not cheapen the voice or dishonour it. Hell is man's own obstinate selfishness."

It was early in the afternoon and he had sat down under a hedge to rest. The ground was high and rolling, and the sea lay below him and the sky blue above. There was a garden on the other side of the hedge, and beyond the garden a cottage, one of those very new red-and-white buildings in which you find some ex-soldier trying to live on the land. The cottage was the vital centre of a small holding, a field full of chickens, a very young orchard, and another field full of vegetables. Everything was rather thin, and suggestive of a struggle.

Mr. Gould was eating his lunch when he heard the two voices.

"Don't, Hal, don't!" said the girl's. "Isn't it the same for me as for you?"

"I'm hanged if it is," said the man's, "cabbages — after leading men! I'm going down to Flexhill."

"The last time you went there—Don't go, Hal, we can't afford it."

"Look here, Bess, I'm not going to be bossed. I want some fun. I'm bored."

"What fun do I get? I'm quite ready to work and pinch here in order to make good."

"You're mean," he said. "All women are mean."

Mr. Gould heard her utter an angry and protesting cry. The man came down the path, flung the gate open and banged it after him, but he did not see Mr. Gould because he turned the other way, and Mr. Gould had shrunk into the hedge. He was a tall young man, and he was still wearing out a pair of army riding breeches and leggings. The rest of him was tweeds and a green felt hat.

Mr. Gould heard the girl come to the gate. She broke into tears.

"Who would have thought," she said aloud, "a year ago! I've tried so hard. I'd go on trying, only he won't help. He's bored, and I love him."

She went back to the cottage, and Mr. Gould got up very quickly and set out to follow the man down to Flexhill. He walked so fast that he had him in sight before he reached the end of the lane, and he did not lose him all that afternoon.

The man went to The Flexhill Arms and had a drink. He was a pleasant, brown-faced lad, but he looked sullen and unhappy. The two selves in him had been fighting, and for the moment the bad self had won. From The Flexhill Arms he wandered rather aimlessly along the sea front, but he did not look at the holiday young women who might have represented his idea of fun. He walked to the end of the parade and away from it over the shingle. He sat down and began to toss stones into the sea.

Martin Gould crunched gently

The Madness of Martin Gould

over the shingle and sat down within two yards of him. The young man gave him an angry look and continued to throw stones into the sea. What did the old fool want to come and sit down here for?

"It's so easy," said Mr. Gould gently, "just as easy as that."

"I beg your pardon," snapped the young man.

"I said that it is just as easy as that."

"What is?"

"Throwing away somebody else's happiness."

The inward part of the young man seemed to give a start, though he answered Mr. Gould with a defiant look.

"Is it!" he said. "But what the devil has that to do with you?"

Mr. Gould smiled at him.

"Nothing—nothing at all. But why throw away the only thing that is worth having?"

The man turned on him fiercely.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that if you throw away somebody else's happiness you will lose your own."

They talked for two hours, after Mr. Gould had confessed to the young man what he had heard and seen.

"Say, will you come back with me?"

"I'll come as far as the gate."

Mr. Gould went as far as the gate, and though he refused to enter he stood there and listened. He heard a girl cry out, and there was the gladness of a surprised love in that cry.

"Oh, Hal!"

What the man said Mr. Gould could not hear, and he guessed that it was too sacred for him to hear, for the two voices had a murmuring tenderness.

"You'll try and forgive me for being a damned selfish fool, Bess?"

"Dear man," she answered, "I think I can forgive you anything so long as you go on loving me."

"Why—that's what the old chap said! I'll bring him in. May I?"

"I'll come with you."

Mr. Gould was caught sneaking off with a happy smile on his face. He was taken prisoner and carried into the cottage.

"You'll come and see us sometimes?" said the man when Martin Gould insisted that he must go.

"Of course I will. God bless you both."

And for him that was but the beginning, a realization of life's possibilities and its limitations. The voice had been with him all these months and it was with him still, and more strongly and dearly than ever, but he had learned to become the voice's instrument. He was not a great orator or a great writer; he had not the magnetic exuberance which delights the crowd; he was just an obscure little old man filled with the eternal wisdom and the happiness which follows that wisdom like its shadow.

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WARWICK DEEPING.

The Madness of Martin Gould

How he speculated in "souls"—and made a profit

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The doctor left it at that.

Now, it is conceivable that in any other country or in some previous century, the madness of Mr. Gould might not have been taken for madness, and that he might have been listened to with kindly amusement, even with respect. But when the chief occupation of a country is that of buying and selling, or of exploiting somebody else, such superfluous nonsense as the possession of a soul cannot be treated seriously. The price of Souls is not quoted in the Stock Exchange list, nor is there any man named Soul figuring in the football news. Mr. Gould should have known this; he had known it, but then something had happened to him, and he had got outside the machine.

But when an elderly gentleman in a morning coat, black-and-white-striped trousers, and a black bowler hat, takes up a position in one of the bays of Waterloo Bridge at half-past eight in the morning and proceeds to remind the hurrying office and shopward crowd that each typist and clerk and waitress has a soul, he is either ignored or moved on by the police. In Mr. Gould's case both things happened. The procession of profiles went by him bored, intent, still digesting a scrambled breakfast and the scrambled eggs of the morning paper. Sometimes a passer-by would throw a half-derisive or curious glance at the crank or lunatic. An occasional girl giggled. He might as well have stood there and tossed stones or oyster-shells into the river. But on the third morning he had the misfortune to attract a small crowd, which was made up of two loafers and a dozen urchins. There was some obstruction of the pavement, and the police intervened.

The constable was quite young, and good-temperedly didactic. He had the blue eye which can never be surprised—the blue eye of a man who has an answer to everything.

"Move on, please. I've been watching you two mornings. You can't do that here."

"But I'm not doing any harm," said Mr. Gould. "I'm trying to do good."

"You are obstructing the traffic. A footpath is made to be walked on."

"Yes, I know that, officer, but that's just the trouble. The earth is becoming a footpath; everybody has to keep moving; no one is allowed to stand still and think."

The constable looked at him tolerantly. It was impossible to feel truculent towards Mr. Gould.

"I can't argue that with you, sir. We have to get our day's work done."

"But isn't there anything else? I'm telling people to remember that we have souls."

"Well, you can't tell them that here, sir. I shall have to charge you if you persist in creating an obstruction. Now then, you kids, clear off."

Mr. Gould proceeded to obey.

"Try the Park," said the constable. "We allow some of them to let off a little steam there."

Mr. Gould made trial of the Park at the time when earnest men explain how and why the existing scheme of things should be turned inside out or upside down. He established himself a little apart, and at one time he had an audience of ten, in spite of the propinquity of a vigorous political meeting. He tried to explain to these people in his gentle voice what the other voice bade him say to them, that unless a man has a light lit inside him his world is in darkness, that it does not profit men to gain the whole world and lose their own souls.

These ten or so odd people attended to him much as they would have attended to a Punch and Judy show. No one appeared moved by what he said until a fiercely grieved-looking man with black kinky hair and an everted lower lip happened to be attracted to the group by some chance word of Mr. Gould's.

A moment later Mr. Gould found himself attacked with passion and with fierceness.

"Who pays you for it? That's what I want to know. Who pays you to come here and serve up all the old dope stuff?"

"I'm not paid for it," said Martin Gould.

"Rot!" roared the fierce man. "You're one of the old cheating gang with God in the managing director's chair. Teaching the fools to make the best of the next world, while you get the whole of this!"

"I don't, my friend. I am trying to help people to be happy."

"What for?"

"Because I'm happy."

"Yes, you look it; got a nice fat little nest-egg put by. We don't want to hear about the next world. We're concentrating on this world, and we're going to have it. We're awake—now."

Mr. Gould nodded his head.

"Yes, your stomach is awake, I think, but however much you fill it—"

The fierce person made some very offensive retort, and Mr. Gould's audience sniggered and deliquesced. He was left standing there with a feeling of vacancy, of bafflement, of pity. The fierce person was so much to be pitied, more so than the bored people who asked only to be amused.

"How is it I can't grip them," he thought, "even when that voice tells me what to say? How is it that this noisy fellow next door has hundreds round him?"

He became a part of the adjacent crowd; he listened. The speaker was passionate, truculent, obviously sincere, and yet it seemed to Mr. Gould that all his talk was of material things. Some people had all the money. Mr. Gould heard much about houses, public service, slums, food, wages, slavery, the hours of slavery, parasites, the redistribution of commodities. The crowd was interested, absorbed. He watched the faces round him.

"It's all an appeal to the stomach in man," he reflected, "and it gets them."

He felt saddened. He wandered away and down to the Serpentine, and sitting on a seat, he watched the water, and the birds and the children at play.

"Extraordinary!" he said to himself. "Extraordinary!"

For it was extraordinary that the world should be for ever failing to learn that a surfeit of physical things does not make men happy.

"It is because the majority have not experienced it," he thought, "that those false prophets up there are able to delude them. They tell a man that if he has a fine house, unlimited food, plenty of clothes and very little work, he is going to be happy for ever and ever. As though life could be an eternal bank holiday at Southend or Blackpool!"

He nodded his head.

"But it is damnable—it is blasphemy to teach them that. It's not true. And when you try to tell them it is not true, they gnash their teeth at you and call you a hired dope merchant."



HE wandered home to his solitary room in a Kensington lodging-house and ate his supper, which consisted of Dutch cheese,

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bread and water. He was glad of his outwardly poor room and supper, not self-righteously so, but because they made him feel consistent. They put him peacefully beyond the gibes of the fierce person. And as the darkness fell he sat at the open window and listened to the voice. It talked to him regularly now. It was the voice of supreme love and supreme wisdom. It filled him with spiritual food, this voice of the woman whom he had loved, and who had been his life's comrade.

The voice told him to persevere, and his perseverance came near involving him in awkward adventures. He was unlearned in mob psychology, and he had not the savoury meat to offer which the crowd desired. He tried to spread his message in other ways, making pilgrimages through the streets, smiling into people's faces and offering them his gentle wisdom.

"Do not make money your god."

One deaf lady, addressed outside a jeweller's in Piccadilly, flared in his face and threatened to give him in charge. In fact she looked about for a constable, but fortunately for Mr. Gould, she did not see one.

ON one wet night, in a turning off Shaftesbury Avenue, he spoke to a passing figure which brushed close to him.

"Remember—you have a soul."

She turned on him like a fury. He saw her bleached face in the dim light.

"None of your godly sauce! I'm what you—made me, but I'm not taking it lying down."

She slapped his face. There was no one about, and she shut him off in a doorway. Martin Gould was shocked, for he understood that he had hurt her.

"I'm sorry," he said, "but I meant it. I'm not a pious man, but we both have hearts, my dear."

She put her face close to his.

"What's the matter with you, old sport? What is it you're playing at?"

"I'm trying to make people happier."

There was something in his voice that touched her. She drew away with a twitch of the shoulders.

"Good Lord! You funny old bloke! Sorry I smacked you. Good night."

"Good night, child," said Martin Gould.

But London continued to baffle him, for no one had the time or the desire to listen

to his voice, and one day in June he was moved to go down into the country. He packed a handbag and walked to Waterloo. His idea was to travel twenty miles by train and then take to the high road and his own feet. He got out at Weybridge. He found himself wandering across the heath between the station and the village, and at the bottom of the heath he came upon a number of children playing in a rather frowsy patch of sand, rubbish and old tin cans.

"Ha, children!" thought Martin Gould.

Had he not forgotten the children? Should not any scheme of betterment begin with the children? "Suffer little children to come unto Me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

He approached them.

"Well, my dears, what's the game you are playing?"

They were not nice children. They seemed to see something ridiculous in the figure of Mr. Gould. They had hard eyes and hard faces, and they were rude to him. In fact they were more than rude, they mocked him and threw sand. They called him an old sheep's head.

"Someone has forgotten to teach you manners," he said.

A very dirty small boy stared him in the face.

"Ere," he said truculently, "we don't take sauce from toffs these days. We're as good as you, and a bit better. My dad could punch your 'ead off."

Mr. Gould smiled.

"I dare say he could, son, but a donkey can kick harder than your dad can hit."

But he was depressed. He wandered through the village down to the Thames, and there by the flickering water and amid the greenness he sat down on the bank and took a packet of sandwiches from his bag. He could hear the roar of the sluices, the wind in the poplars, the voices on the river. Swans glided up, and he fed them with pieces of bread.

"Hate, too much hate, everywhere," he reflected. "Hatred, suspicion and greed. I don't seem to speak the right language—somehow."

He was troubled. He began to wonder whether he was going to fail the voice, to prove a broken instrument, useless and ineffectual. Not for one moment did he doubt the voice or the words that the voice spoke to him. His rendering of the message seemed wrong. Why was it wrong? Why did he fail?

"It cannot be in them," he thought with characteristic gentleness; "it must be in me. Now, if I could succeed just once, make one man or woman happy, help some lost soul back to the higher path."

He looked at the swans.

"They come to me—yes, for food. The eternal stomach! But do not men hunger for spiritual food, or has the world lost its appetite for God?"

He sat and meditated.

"I must persevere," he said to himself.

"I must not fail the voice, her voice."

MARTIN GOULD travelled very many miles before he happened upon a particular cottage in which two people were losing the one thing which makes life worth living. He happened on it quite by accident; he had had many failures upon the road, rebuffs, ridicule. He was learning other truths, that one should not throw pearls before swine, and that souls which are not ripe cannot accept ripe wisdom.

"Perhaps the voice is for the few," he reflected—"the few who are ripe to hear it. I will not cheapen the voice or dishonour it. Hell is man's own obstinate selfishness."

It was early in the afternoon, and he had sat down under a hedge to rest. The ground was high and rolling, and the sea lay below him, and the sky blue above. There was a garden on the other side of the hedge, and beyond the garden a cottage, one of those very new red-and-white buildings in which you find some ex-soldier trying to live on the land. The cottage was the vital centre of a small holding, a field full of chickens, a very young orchard, and another field full of vegetables. Everything was rather thin, and suggestive of a struggle.

Mr. Gould was eating his lunch when he heard the two voices.

"Don't, Hal, don't!" said the girl's.

"Isn't it the same for me as for you?"

"I'm hanged if it is," said the man's.

"Cabbages—after leading men! I'm going down to Flexhill."

"The last time you went there— Don't go, Hal, we can't afford it."

"Look here, Bess, I'm not going to be bossed. I want some fun. I'm bored."

"What fun do I get? I'm quite ready to work and pinch here in order to make good."

"You're mean," he said. "All women are mean."

Mr. Gould heard her utter an angry and protesting cry. The man came down the path, flung the gate open and banged it after him, but he did not see Mr. Gould because he turned the other way, and Mr. Gould had shrunk into the hedge. He was a tall young man, and he was still wearing out a pair of army riding-breeches.

Mr. Gould heard the girl come to the gate. She broke into tears.

"Who would have thought," she said aloud, "a year ago! I've tried so hard. I'd go on trying, only he won't help. He's bored, and I love him."

She went back to the cottage, and Mr. Gould got up very quickly and set out to follow the man down to Flexhill. He walked so fast that he had him in sight before he reached the end of the lane, and he did not lose him all that afternoon.

The man went to The Flexhill Arms and had a drink. He was a pleasant, brown-faced lad, but he looked sullen and unhappy. The two selves in him had been fighting, and for the moment the bad self had won. From The Flexhill Arms he wandered rather aimlessly along the sea front, but he did not look at the holiday young women who might have represented his idea of fun. He walked to the end of the parade and away from it over the shingle. He sat down and began to toss stones into the sea.

Martin Gould crunched gently over the shingle, and sat down within two yards of him. The young man gave him an angry look and continued to throw stones into the sea. What did the old fool want to come and sit down here for?

"It's so easy," said Mr. Gould gently, "just as easy as that."

"I beg your pardon," snapped the young man.

"I said that it is just as easy as that."

"What is?"

"Throwing away somebody else's happiness."

The inward part of the young man seemed to give a start, though he answered Mr. Gould with a defiant look.

"Is it?" he said. "But what the devil has that to do with you?"

Mr. Gould smiled at him.

"Nothing—nothing at all. But why throw away the only thing that is worth having?"

The man turned on him fiercely.

"What do you mean?"

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"I mean that if you throw away somebody else's happiness you will lose your own."

They talked for two hours, after Mr. Gould had confessed to the young man what he had heard and seen.

"Say, will you come back with me?"

"I'll come as far as the gate."

Mr. Gould went as far as the gate, and though he refused to enter, he stood there and listened. He heard a girl cry out, and there was the gladness of a surprised love in that cry.

"Oh, Hal!"

What the man said Mr. Gould could not hear, and he guessed that it was too sacred for him to hear, for the two voices had a murmuring tenderness.

"You'll try and forgive me for being a damned selfish fool, Bess?"

"Dear man," she answered, "I think I can forgive you anything so long as you go on loving me."

"Why—that's what the old chap said! I'll bring him in. May I?"

"I'll come with you."

Mr. Gould was caught sneaking off with a happy smile on his face. He was taken prisoner and carried into the cottage.

"You'll come and see us sometimes?" said the man when Martin Gould insisted that he must go.

"Of course I will. God bless you both."

And for him that was but the beginning, a realization of life's possibilities and its

limitations. The voice had been with him all these months and it was with him still, and more strongly and dearly than ever, but he had learned to become the voice's instrument. He was not a great orator or a great writer; he had not the magnetic exuberance which delights the crowd; he was just an obscure little old man filled with the eternal wisdom and the happiness which follows that wisdom like its shadow.

"If I can't be a beacon on a hill-top, I can be a candle in an attic," he reflected. "The thing is to bring light, even though it is only the light of a candle."

He returned to his South London lodging-house, and he lived there for many years, becoming a familiar figure in certain ugly streets, an old man whose face was beautiful because it was happy. He had many friends, chiefly among the sick and the unfortunate. He was known to many of the doctors. But when the malady was spiritual and beyond the power of the physician to heal, people would send for old Martin Gould. He had a voice that healed.

Some thick-headed pusher of a barrow, happening to speak of him irreverently to a worried woman who was the mother of seven children, was caught in a whirlwind of cockney wrath.

"Balmy, ain't he?"

"Balmy! Go an' bile yer silly 'ead. 'E's a little old b—y angel. Gawd forgive me for usin' such langwidge!"



Zachary Goes To America

A startling discovery—and its consequences

By WARWICK DEEPING

ZACHARY DICKER paused at the gate in the hedge as he had paused there most evenings for the last twenty years. He looked up the lane and down the lane, as though his pausing there denoted a secret restlessness, the expectation of something new and sudden and strange appearing in the lane, something that would change mysteriously his orderly life. But the world—his world—was as it always was, and would be. He saw his white ducks coming in over the green swell of the hill, waddling in file and very white against the blue of the sky. He saw the Down country in the distance, and the valley country below in a shimmer of evening sunlight. He saw Lavender's windmill, the three big fir trees on Monk's Barrow, the little white chapel of ease where he and Elizabeth had been married. It stared at him from down yonder like a hard white eye.

Zachary stroked his trousers.

"Sure! There you are! I be here all right. You needn't be always watching!"

He grinned ironically, and turned to the grey farm-house, all stucco and severity behind the protesting figures of three or four wind-blown yews.

Elizabeth was at the living-room window.

"Drat the man, how he do loiter!"

She had said that nearly every evening, and if she had not said it she had thought it.

Zachary walked round to the back door, and the sound of the scraping of his heavy boots was broken by his wife's voice.

"I suppose you be wanting some supper?"

It was her challenge, and Zachary accepted it.

"A man has to feed his beasts afore he feeds himself."

"Oh, I know all about that!" said the voice. "If I had no more sense of time than you have there'd be no supper for ye."

"You're a wonnerful woman!"

"I'm a mighty patient one."

After that there was silence so far as their tongues were concerned. Zachary took off his boots, put on his slippers, washed his hands at the sink and went in to supper. It was a good supper, served hot and to the minute, fragrant, comforting; and the Dickers sat opposite each other in their Windsor chairs and went through the meal without a word. Elizabeth was a tall woman, dark, with fine eyes in a hard face; she was neat to the uttermost limits of neatness; she had no children and gave nothing away. Zachary was rounder than his wife, but brown and tough, with a broad nose and shrewd blue eyes; a successful man, an indomitable worker. They had lived together for twenty years, and they quarrelled on four days out of seven.

Not that the neighbours knew of it. This quarrelling and nagging was their own affair; continuous, habitual, a form of amusement almost. The Dicker marriage was considered a very successful one, though it was childless and rather too prosperous.

When the meal was over Zachary brought out his pipe and crossed over to the fire.

"Suppose you ain't ordered that tobacco?"

"You look and see," said his wife.

He opened the cupboard beside the fireplace, and, of course, the new tin was there. Zachary fingered it and glanced at the vase on the mantelpiece that was kept filled with paper spills. His after-dinner pipe had left just one spill in the vase, but now it was full again. The grievance was absent, and but present in absence. She was a danged difficult woman to catch out; in fact, it was almost impossible to catch Elizabeth Dicker tripping inside her own house.

"I hope you're satisfied!" said she.

"Where be my paper?" he grunted.

"Where it always is. Now, you make yourself real comfortable, my man, while I do a bit more slaving."

"That's a nice word," said he, "for a wife."

"It's true, anyway," she retorted, carrying out the dirty plates and leaving him to his pipe.

The squabble ended there, but on more fierce occasions it developed to a familiar climax.

"I be sick o' your tongue. I'll go off to Americee."

This was Zachary's threat. He had used it for years, and yet it never grew stale.

"Yes, do!" was Elizabeth's retort. "I'd be a world more comfortable with my sister Jane."

They had spoken these words so often that the threat of separation had come to have a convincing possibility for both of them. They played with it as though it were a loaded pistol which might go off at any moment. And yet it never did go off. That was its fascination.

What they expressed to each other it would be difficult to say. Each had a complex mind-picture of the other, made up of all sorts of impressions and associations.

To Zachary his wife may have suggested a pair of fine dark eyes above a spotless apron, strong tea, well-greased boots, his tobacco jar, the glass of ale at dinner, thick socks neatly darned, buttons sewn on, the red flannel lining to his waistcoat, a good fire that never sulked. "Never knew that woman let the fire out." She always gave him sausages on Saturdays, when sausages were in season. She went to church with him on Sundays, and there was a part of Zachary that was rather proud of her. She had a skin like a thorn hedge in blossom, though she had turned forty. Her dairy was, as he expressed it: "Fit for the Queen to wash in," with its spotless pans, and its smell of butter and of cream. But, dang it, she had a tongue!

To Elizabeth he was a stolid, indomitable, rather gruff creature. He suggested chaff and straw, and Sussex mud, and the blue sky between March clouds. His big brown hands looked all knuckles. She had never known him beaten, never seen him give in. He puffed at pipes, and grunted, and made a great noise with his

feet, and cursed other men when necessary. He left a sense of movement and the smell of tobacco-smoke about the house. He walked slowly, but he never wasted his time. He went to church with her, and said "Amen" with gruff emphasis, and was the hardest, most efficient, and most honest man in the congregation. His boots were of a superlative and shiny blackness.

They were making money; they were saving money; they had bought the farm, and each knew to a penny what they possessed. Most people envied them, yet they kept up that familiar refrain:

"Danged if I won't go to Americee!"

"You go, my man! I'd be much more comfortable with my sister Jane."



ABOUT that time the old parson died and a new parson came to the village, a man of middle age with an inquisitive and eager face, who walked miles every day and who preached strenuous sermons. His name was Grundy, and some people said that he was very much related to the lady of that name. He was full of curiosity—godly and otherwise. Also, he was something of an antiquarian. "Always ferreting round," as the clerk put it. "I do believe he has read through all the registers in t' last three months."

Mr. Grundy had been six months in the parish when Zachary and Elizabeth Dicker had the worst quarrel of their lives. It arose all about nothing, as such quarrels will. Zachary had forgotten to take his boots off, and had brought much mud in on Mrs. Elizabeth's new Kidderminster carpet. The threat was renewed, but it was uttered as heralding a fact that was to be.

"I'm fair sick of it. I'll sell the place up and go to Americee. You shall have half the money, my girl. The Dickers be 'unt mean."

"You have said it often enough," quoth the wife.

"This time I mean it."

"Why, so do I, my man. I'll write to Jane this very night."

And there the matter rested for a day or two, buried beneath an ominous silence, while each party to the threat made as though to let the other understand that the decision was irrevocable and final.

Zachary Goes To America

Zachary hinted that he had been down to see Lawyer Roper, at Bidhurst, to arrange about the sale of the farm; Elizabeth led him to believe that she was waiting for a letter from her sister Jane.

On the Tuesday morning Mr. Dicker received a note from Mr. Grundy. It was a queer letter, a puzzling letter. "Mr. Grundy had a very important and serious communication to make to Mr. Dicker." Zachary scratched his head over it, stuffed the letter into his pocket and, after putting his men to work, went down to the vicarage.

About eleven o'clock, Elizabeth, who was turning out her best parlour with a thoroughness that suggested every idea of permanence, saw Zachary come in at the gate. He walked slowly up the garden path, hands in his pockets, stick tucked under his arm, his blue eyes set in an intense stare. He looked as though something had so astonished him that he would never cease from being astonished. She noticed that he approached the front door instead of going round to the back of the house, and Zachary never used the front door save on ceremonial occasions, and on Sundays. All the rest of the week it was kept bolted.

She heard him try the door, and finding it bolted he stood and knocked.

"Well, I'm blessed!" thought she. "What has come to the man?"

Elizabeth Dicker went and unfastened the door and let him in.

"Thank ye," he said with a sort of formal politeness. "Thank ye, Miss Noakes."

Now "Miss Noakes" was Elizabeth Dicker's maiden name. She looked very hard at him, and it crossed her mind that he had been drinking, though in all her married life she had never known him the worse for liquor.

"Are you for being funny, Zack?"

He did not trouble to think of a retort. He hung up his hat and put his stick away just as he did on Sundays, and, walking solemnly into the disordered parlour, sat down on the red and yellow plush sofa.

"I've some news for ye, Elizabeth," he began.

"Indeed!" said she, growing suddenly serious and watchful. "So, maybe, you have been to see Mr. Roper?"

"No. Roper can wait. I reckon we shall want him by and by. I've been with Parson Grundy."

"Oh!" said she. "Parson Grundy."

Zachary looked hard at her.

"You'd better be sitting down Elizabeth. It be a powerful bit of news."

She sat down, with her duster in her hands.

"Well, let's hear it."

"It's just this, my girl, we be'unt married; we never have been married all this twenty years."

She sat there very stiff and erect, and a little scornful.

"Zack, you *have* been drinking!" she said.

He looked at her, and she saw how sober his eyes were.

"Not a drop. I'm just telling you that you are Miss Elizabeth Noakes."

"Indeed! And where did you get this nonsense?"

"It be'unt nonsense at all, my girl. Parson told me."

"Parson Grundy?"

"Sure."

"The man's a moithering fool. But what do you mean, Zack?"

"Why, we be'unt married."

"Don't tell me!"

"But I am telling ye. It's monstrous queer, and I don't quite understand the rights of it. But you mind us being married at the chapel of ease?"

"Do I not!"

"Well, we weren't married."

"Someone's daft."

"Someone was, my girl. Seems that somethin' should have bin done to the place weren't done, something to do with the consecration or licence or whatever you call it. Dang me if I understand. But it weren't a proper place for folk to be married in; Mr. Grundy's found it all out. We weren't married, and accordin' to the law we ain't married now."

She sat and stared at him.

"Then—we have been living in sin all these years."

"I wouldn't say that, my girl; we didn't know nowt about it. Besides—"

"Besides what?"

"We be'unt the only ones. There be five or six other couples in the same cart as we be."

"And what does Mr. Grundy say about it?"

"Oh, he says that it can all be put right, but that we've got to be married all over again!"

That was the situation. It was amazing,

monstrous, but she did not doubt the truth of it, for Zachary Dicker had never been a liar. They were not married; they never had been married, and perhaps she saw in Zachary's eyes the very thought that dominated her own mind. This perennial treat of parting! Why, here it was, sitting in their best parlour between them like an old familiar friend, smug and smiling, and saying to both of them: "Well, what about me?" What were they going to do about it? Neither of them had attempted any *rapprochement* after the last furious squabble.

They looked at each other rather like two wrestlers taking each other's measure.

"It's a queer situation," said the woman in a perfectly level voice.

"It is," quoth her man, in a tone that committed him to no charge of emotion.

"But looking at it as we be situated. Yes, as we be situated, my girl. It might seem as though——"

"It might that——"

She paused, watching him, obstinately determined that he should be responsible for the decisive step, while Zachary was just as determined that the responsibility should be hers.

"Of course," said she, "you may be pleased, or maybe you're not. I reckon you want to say——"

"What do I want to say? You be trying to put words in my mouth."

"No. I'm not."

"Yes, you be. I have said nowt as yet."

"That's helpful, be'unt it?"

"Well, you do help a man, don't you!"

"Some men be'unt helpless."

"That be me, I guess! I know what you be drivin' at."

"Oh, do you!"

"You be thinkin': 'Now, surely, I can be comfortably rid of the fellow.'"

"I be, be I!"

"Deny it, my girl!"

"I'm not denying anything to please you."

"That's good! To please me! Have I ever axed you to please me? You have always pleased yourself, and you can do it now."

"So I will," said she.

"Same here. I reckon this here parson chap has done us——"

"You go and tell him that. You go and tell him that a poor woman has come out of bondage."

"So I will."

"And that's all the gratitude a woman gets! I wouldn't go on with this dog's life; no, not for the Bishop of Canterbury and all the parsons."

He blinked furious eyes at her.

"And I've done nowt all these years? No, I'm not saying another word. I'll go down to t' parson and tell him we'll stay unmarried."

"Yes, you tell him that. And that I be going to my sister as a single woman, and thank God for it."

He got up, went out into the passage, took his hat and stick, opened the door, stepped out and closed it after him. She stood well back in the room so that if he turned round he should not see her at the window. She watched him walk to the gate, and as he went out of it a great pang shot through her.

"He's going," she thought. "He means it! After all these years! Dang him, let him go! I reckon I'm as strong as he is."

But she sat down on the sofa and wept angrily, unwillingly, calling herself all sorts of names for being such a fool.

Outside, in the sunlight, Zachary Dicker had pulled up on the other side of the thorn hedge. He pushed his stick into it, and making a peep-hole, surveyed the house, and particularly the parlour window. There was no sign of her, no face, no glimmer of any relenting.

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MR. GRUNDY was shocked and scandalized. Two of his most respected parishioners refusing to go on with a sacred contract after twenty years of life together! He was very much troubled. He pointed out to Zachary Dicker that it was the only letter of the law that had failed them, and that in the eyes of God and of men they were man and wife.

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Zachary Goes To America

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"But, man, don't you see—you are disgracing the woman who has been your wife."

"But she ain't been my wife, else why should us have to be married again?"

"No, no. She has been your wife. It was only a mischievous slip in the law. You cannot mean to put such an insult upon a woman."

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"She did."

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"But, madam, public opinion——"

"Drat public opinion! We're not harming anyone but ourselves."

"But, my dear lady, consider the example, its effect on public morals."

"Sir," said she, "I've been true to my man, and I do believe he has been true to me. There be lots of folks in your parish who can't say that. Let them begin on their own morals."

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He drove down to Bidhurst and had an interview with old Mr. Roper, and Mr. Roper said "Bless me!" and then politely but briskly told him not to be a fool. And just because Zachary had

begun to realize his own foolishness he was nettled by it, and grew more stubborn.

"What I says, I says. We be going to sell t'farm. Half's to be hers and half mine. You get the papers ready, Master Roper."

Mr. Roper sat back in his chair.

"I shan't do anything of the kind. You go back home and think it over, Dicker, and come to me again in a month."

"Then I guess I shall have to find another lawyer."

"You had better go and find a new head."

Zachary drove home in a bad temper, but before he reached the farm the badness had oozed out of it, and a great melancholy took its place. His blue eyes narrowed. He looked half fearfully at his fields, at the familiar outlines of the house and buildings, and he knew in his heart that he loved every clod and brick and stick about the place. He unharnessed the mare, and when he had stalled her, he sat on the manger with his head between his hands. He felt weak, weak as water, and the mare nosed at him as though she understood.

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She was a hard woman, but not so hard as either he or she had believed, and the thought of the breaking up of her home hurt her and filled her with a feeling of fierce dismay. She loved it; she loved the hard work and her pride in it, and all the things they had bought and treasured during twenty years. And what would

she is in the future, with no man to work for, with no shirts and socks and woollens to be mended, and with no one to grumble to? Yes, grumbling meant caring! No one grumbles to a woman who has ceased to matter.

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Yet, in the spirit she had surrendered, and the proof of it might have been discovered in a certain thing she did. She went through all Zachary's clothes, and mended and patched and washed and ironed, but not when he was there to see her doing it. She arranged all his shirts, socks and woollens in his chest-of-drawers with the most meticulous care, and never had there been such neatness and order.

Then, one day, she went down to Bidhurst, and Zachary was left alone. He did not like it; a queer feeling of loneliness and of helplessness came over him, and after wandering about the farm for an hour he sneaked back to the house. He could not work; there seemed nothing to work for.

He sat by the fire and smoked. He took off his boots, and discovered a big toe protruding through a hole in one sock. He sat and stared at it like a man contemplating disaster.

Presently he went upstairs. He pulled out a drawer and saw all that it contained, and afterwards he pulled out all the drawers and examined every article, turning them over thoughtfully with his big hands. He saw the darns, the patches. There was not a sock or a vest or a shirt that had not passed through Elizabeth's hands before being stowed away ready for his needs.

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He went back and sat by the fire, and when Elizabeth Dicker returned as the dusk was falling she found him sitting there sucking at an empty pipe.

"Why, Zach, ain't you had your tea?"

There was something in her voice that went right to the core of him. He stood up, and his knees were shaking.

"Bess," said he, "I've been thinking."

"Oh!" she answered. "What have you been thinkin' about, Zach?"

"Americee."

"It's a fine country, they say."

"Damn Americee!" said he suddenly. "I doan't want t'go there; no, not unless——"

She was standing by the table, and in the dusk her face was twitching either with anger or with the imminence of tears.

"You don't want to go to Americee, Zach? Is that true?"

"It be."

"Well, that's honest of you. And I don't want to go to my sister Jane's."

Somehow, before she realized it, he had her in his big arms.

"Bess, what would you and I do with no one to quarrel with? Kiss us. Why, bless me, I do believe that quarrelling be our form of love-makin'. Dang it, I'd have your sharp tongue rather than any little honeypot in t'whole world."

"Would you, Zach?" said she. "Here, man, but you be crushing me like a bear."

"I be a bear. Dang it, that's just what I be."

"And I won't say I don't like it. Oh, Zach, you big fool, we'll have to eat our words to the parson man!"

"I'll eat 'em with relish. You can cook 'em, my girl. We'll have to have that there marriage, and you'll be swearing to 'love, honour and obey.'"

She stiffened and made as though to hold him off.

"I won't, I won't swear to obey ye."

"But it be in the service book."

"I don't care. I won't swear to that."

He laughed and pulled her back to him.

"Be'unt it good—this quarrellin'? Why, what's a word before a parson, my girl? You can say it with a wink, my dear, and I'll wink back."



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13

Zachary goes to America

By

WARWICK DEEPING

ZACHARY DICKER paused at the gate in the hedge as he had paused there most evenings for the last twenty years. He looked up the lane and down the lane, as though his pausing there denoted a secret restlessness, the expectation of something new and sudden and strange appearing in the lane, something that would change mysteriously his orderly life. But the world—his world—was as it always was, and would be. He saw his white ducks coming in over the green swell of the hill, waddling in file and very white against the blue of the sky. He saw the Down country in the distance, and the valley country below in a shimmer of evening sunlight. He saw Lavender's windmill, the three big fir trees on Monk's Barrow, the little white chapel of ease where he and Elizabeth had been married. It stared at him from down yonder like a hard white eye.

Zachary stroked his trousers.

"Sure! There you are! I be here all right. You needn't be always watching!"

He grinned ironically, and turned to the grey farm-house, all stucco and severity behind the protesting figures of three or four wind-blown yews.

Elizabeth was at the living-room window.

"Drat the man, how he do loiter!"

She had said that nearly every evening, and if she had not said it she had thought it.

Zachary walked round to the back door, and the sound of the scraping of his heavy boots was broken by his wife's voice.

"I suppose you be wanting some supper?"

It was her challenge, and Zachary accepted it.

"A man has to feed his beasts afore he feeds himself."

"Oh, I know all about that!" said the

voice. "If I had no more sense of time than you have there'd be no supper for ye."

"You're a wonnerful woman!"

"I'm a mighty patient one."

After that there was silence so far as their tongues were concerned. Zachary took off his boots, put on his slippers, washed his hands at the sink and went in to supper. It was a good supper, served hot and to the minute, fragrant, comforting; and the Dickers sat opposite each other in their windsor chairs and went through the meal without a word. Elizabeth was a tall woman, dark, with fine eyes in a hard face; she was neat to the uttermost limits of neatness; she had no children and gave nothing away. Zachary was rounder than his wife, but brown and tough, with a broad nose and shrewd blue eyes; a successful man, an indomitable worker. They had lived together for twenty years, and they quarreled on four days out of seven.

Not that the neighbours knew of it. This quarrelling and nagging was their own affair; continuous, habitual, a form of amusement almost. The Dicker marriage was considered a very successful one, though it was childless and rather too prosperous.

When the meal was over Zachary brought out his pipe and crossed over to the fire.

"Suppose you ain't ordered that tobacco?"

"You look and see," said his wife.

He opened the cupboard beside the fireplace, and, of course, the new tin was there. Zachary fingered it and glanced at the vase on the mantelpiece that was kept filled with paper spills. His after-dinner pipe had left just one spill in the vase, but now it was full again. The grievance was absent, and but present in absence. She was a danged difficult woman to catch

out; in fact, it was almost impossible to catch Elizabeth Dicker tripping inside her own house.

"I hope you're satisfied!" said she.

"Where be my paper?" he grunted.

"Where it always is. Now, you make yourself real comfortable, my man, while I do a bit more slaving."

"That's a nice word," said he, "for a wife."

"It's true, anyway," she retorted, carrying out the dirty plates and leaving him to his pipe.

The squabble ended there, but on more fierce occasions it developed to a familiar climax.

"I be sick o' your tongue. I'll go off to Americee."

This was Zachary's threat. He had used it for years, and yet it never grew stale.

"Yes, do!" was Elizabeth's retort. "I'd be a world more comfortable with my sister Jane."

They had spoken these words so often that the threat of separation had come to have a convincing possibility for both of them. They played with it as though it were a loaded pistol which might go off at any moment. And yet it never did go off. That was its fascination.

What they expressed to each other it would be difficult to say. Each had a complex mind-picture of the other, made up of all sorts of impressions and associations.

To Zachary his wife may have suggested a pair of fine dark eyes above a spotless apron, strong tea, well-greased boots, his tobacco jar, the glass of ale at dinner, thick socks neatly darned, buttons sewn on, the red flannel lining to his waistcoat, a good fire that never sulked. "Never knew that woman let the fire out." She always gave him sausages on Saturdays, when sausages were in season. She went to church with him on Sundays, and there was a part of Zachary that was rather proud of her. She had a skin like a thorn hedge in blossom, though she had turned forty. Her dairy was, as he expressed it: "Fit for the Queen to wash in," with its spotless pans, and its smell of butter and of cream. But, dang it, she had a tongue!

To Elizabeth he was a stolid, indomitable, rather gruff creature. He suggested chaff and straw, and Sussex mud, and the blue sky between March clouds. His big

brown hands looked all knuckles. She had never known him beaten, never seen him give in. He puffed at pipes, and grunted, and made a great noise with his feet, and cursed other men when necessary. He left a sense of movement and the smell of tobacco-smoke about the house. He walked slowly, but he never wasted his time. He went to church with her, and said "Amen" with gruff emphasis, and was the hardest, most efficient, and most honest man in the congregation. His boots were of a superlative and shiny blackness.

They were making money; they were saving money; they had bought the farm, and each knew to a penny what they possessed. Most people envied them, yet they kept up that familiar refrain:

"Danged if I won't go to Americee!"

"You go, my man! I'd be much more comfortable with my sister Jane."

About that time the old parson died and a new parson came to the village, a man of middle age with an inquisitive and eager face, who walked miles every day and who preached strenuous sermons. His name was Grundy, and some people said that he was very much related to the lady of that name. He was full of curiosity—godly and otherwise. Also, he was something of an antiquarian. "Always ferreting round," as the clerk put it. "I do believe he has read through all the registers in t' last three months."

Mr. Grundy had been six months in the parish when Zachary and Elizabeth Dicker had the worst quarrel of their lives. It arose all about nothing, as such quarrels will. Zachary had forgotten to take his boots off, and had brought much mud in on Mrs. Elizabeth's new Kidderminster carpet. The threat was renewed, but it was uttered as heralding a fact that was to be.

"I'm fair sick of it. I'll sell the place up and go to Americee. You shall have half the money, my girl. The Dickers be 'unt mean."

"You have said it often enough," quoth the wife.

"This time I mean it."

"Why, so do I, my man. I'll write to Jane this very night."

And there the matter rested for a day or two, buried beneath an ominous silence, while each party to the threat made as though to let the other understand that the decision was irrevocable and final.

Zachary hinted that he had been down to see Lawyer Roper, at Bidhurst, to arrange about the sale of the farm; Elizabeth led him to believe that she was waiting for a letter from her sister Jane.

On the Tuesday morning Mr. Dicker received a note from Mr. Grundy. It was a queer letter, a puzzling letter. "Mr. Grundy had a very important and serious communication to make to Mr. Dicker." Zachary scratched his head over it, stuffed the letter into his pocket and, after putting his men to work, went down to the vicarage.

About eleven o'clock, Elizabeth, who was turning out her best parlour with a thoroughness that suggested every idea of permanence, saw Zachary come in at the gate. He walked slowly up the garden path, hands in his pockets, stick tucked under his arm, his blue eyes set in an intense stare. He looked as though something had so astonished him that he would never cease from being astonished. She noticed that he approached the front door instead of going round to the back of the house, and Zachary never used the front door save on ceremonial occasions, and on Sundays. All the rest of the week it was kept bolted.

She heard him try the door, and finding it bolted he stood and knocked.

"Well, I'm blessed!" thought she. "What has come to the man?"

Elizabeth Dicker went and unfastened the door and let him in.

"Thank ye," he said with a sort of formal politeness. "Thank ye, Miss Noakes."

Now "Miss Noakes" was Elizabeth Dicker's maiden name. She looked very hard at him, and it crossed her mind that he had been drinking, though in all her married life she had never known him the worse for liquor.

"Are you for being funny, Zack?"

He did not trouble to think of a retort. He hung up his hat and put his stick away just as he did on Sundays, and, walking solemnly into the disordered parlour, sat down on the red and yellow plush sofa.

"I've some news for ye, Elizabeth," he began.

"Indeed!" said she, growing suddenly serious and watchful. "So, maybe, you have been to see Mr. Roper?"

"No. Roper can wait. I reckon we shall want him by and by. I've been with Parson Grundy."

"Oh!" said she. "Parson Grundy."

Zachary looked hard at her.

"You'd better be sitting down, Elizabeth. It be a powerful bit of news."

She sat down, with her duster in her hands.



"Well, let's hear it."

"It's just this, my girl, we be'unt married; we never have been married all this twenty year."

She sat there very stiff and erect, and a little scornful.

"Zack, you *have* been drinking!" she said.

He looked at her, and she saw how sober his eyes were.

"Not a drop. I'm just telling you that you are Miss Elizabeth Noakes."

"Indeed! And where did you get this nonsense?"

"It be'unt nonsense at all, my girl. Parson told me."

queer, and I don't quite understand the rights of it. But you mind us being married at the chapel of ease?"

"Do I not!"

"Well, we weren't married."

"Someone's daft."

"Someone was, my girl. Seems that somethin' should have bin done to the place weren't done, something to do with



"We be'unt married; we never have been married all this twenty year!"

"Parson Grundy?"

"Sure."

"The man's a moithering fool. But what do you mean, Zack?"

"Why, we be'unt married."

"Don't tell me!"

"But I am telling ye. It's monstrous

the consecration or licence or whatever you call it. Dang me if I understand. But it weren't a proper place for folk to be married in; Mr. Grundy's found it all out. We weren't married, -and accordin' to the law we ain't married now."

She sat and stared at him.

"Then—we have been living in sin all these years."

"I wouldn't say that, my girl; we didn't know nowt about it. Besides——"

"Besides what?"

"We be'unt the only ones. There be five or six other couples in the same cart as we be."

"And what does Mr. Grundy say about it?"

"Oh, he says that it can all be put right, but that we've got to be married all over again!"

That was the situation. It was amazing, monstrous, but she did not doubt the truth of it, for Zachary Dicker had never been a liar. They were not married; they never had been married, and perhaps she saw in Zachary's eyes the very thought that dominated her own mind. This perennial treat of parting! Why, here it was, sitting in their best parlour between them like an old familiar friend, smug and smiling, and saying to both of them: "Well, what about me?" What were they going to do about it? Neither of them had attempted any *rapprochement* after the last furious squabble.

They looked at each other rather like two wrestlers taking each other's measure.

"It's a queer situation," said the woman in a perfectly level voice.

"It is," quoth her man, in a tone that committed him to no charge of emotion.

"But looking at it as we be situated. Yes, as we be situated, my girl. It might seem as though——"

"It might that——"

She paused, watching him, obstinately determined that he should be responsible for the decisive step, while Zachary was just as determined that the responsibility should be hers.

"Of course," said she, "you may be pleased, or maybe you're not. I reckon you want to say——"

"What do I want to say? You be trying to put words in my mouth."

"No. I'm not."

"Yes, you be. I have said nowt as yet."

"That's helpful, be'unt it?"

"Well, you do help a man, don't you!"

"Some men be'unt helpable."

"That be me, I guess! I know what you be drivin' at."

"Oh, do you!"

"You be thinkin': 'Now, surely, I can be comfortably rid of the fellow.'"

"I be, be I!"

"Deny it, my girl!"

"I'm not denying anything to please you."

"That's good! To please me! Have I ever axed you to please me? You have always pleased yourself, and you can do it now."

"So I will," said she.

"Same here. I reckon this here parson chap has done us——"

"You go and tell him that. You go and tell him that a poor woman has come out of bondage."

"So I will."

"And that's all the gratitude a woman gets! I wouldn't go on with this dog's life; no, not for the Bishop of Canterbury and all the parsons."

He blinked furious eyes at her.

"And I've done nowt all these years? No, I'm not saying another word. I'll go down to t' parson and tell him we'll stay unmarried."

"Yes, you tell him that. And that I be going to my sister as a single woman, and thank God for it."

He got up, went out into the passage, took his hat and stick, opened the door, stepped out and closed it after him. She stood well back in the room so that if he turned round he should not see her at the window. She watched him walk to the gate, and as he went out of it a great pang shot through her.

"He's going," she thought. "He means it! After all these years! Dang him, let him go! I reckon I'm as strong as he is."

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"It be."

"Well, that's honest of you. And I don't want to go to my sister Jane's."

Somehow, before she realized it, he had her in his big arms.

"Bess, what would you and I do with no one to quarrel with? Kiss us. Why, bless me, I do believe that quarrelling be our form of love-makin'. Dang it, I'd have your sharp tongue rather than any little honeypot in t'whole world."

"Would you, Zach?" said she. "Here, man, but you be crushing me like a bear."

"I be a bear. Dang it, that's just what I be."

"And I won't say I don't like it. Oh, Zach, you big fool, we'll have to eat our words to the parson man!"

"I'll eat 'em with relish. You can cook 'em, my girl. We'll have to have that there marriage, and you'll be swearing to 'love, honour and obey.'"

She stiffened and made as though to hold him off.

"I won't, I won't swear to obey ye."

"But it be in the sarvice book."

"I don't care. I won't swear to that."

He laughed and pulled her back to him.

"Be'unt it good—this quarrellin'? Why, what's a word before a parson, my girl? You can say it with a wink, my dear, and I'll wink back."

GREAT STORIES of Human Courage—XII

There are times when, through sensitiveness or imagination, the bravest of us is afraid. Craddock, the chief character in this absorbing story, suffers from an inborn dread which he feels powerless to overcome. He has moral courage, but there are situations in his life when he is paralysed by fear. Can this man be called a coward, because of this one weakness? Mr. Deeping answers this question in an unmistakable way.

THE boat was Dutch, and they boarded her at Southampton on a windy day in June. All three of them were English, and complete strangers to each other. The girl was the first to appear on deck, and a deck-steward hastened to find her a chair.

She had changed into white, and it suited her, for she was a dark woman, wiry without being too thin, with the smell of the heather and the woods in the bloom of her. Her skin had an olive tint, and the colour of her neck was a soft, bronzed yellow. Her quick glances were everywhere. Her hair showed a soft, black crispness, and when she smiled—which was not often—the long line of her red mouth curved upwards into either cheek.

She sat there, observing things and people, a self-reliant young woman, a little too sure of herself and too critical of others, and very quick in the registering of her impressions. She had no fear of anything. She had lived much with dogs and horses and men, and in a country where a woman might choose to go armed.

The second Briton appeared upon the deck. A large man, he leant against the

white rails with that English air of being on the top of all material things. He wore white trousers, a blue serge coat, and a Panama hat with the front part of the brim turned down. His moustache was big and reddish and firm, curling away from a broad nose and a pair of cheeks that looked stuffed out with self-confidence and vitality. His brown eyes had a tawny tinge, and were full of self-congratulatory twinkles. He smoked a cigar, and it made his lips look rather fatter and coarser than they were.

This man had eyes in the back of his head. If there was a woman about—an attractive woman—he managed to be quickly aware of her. He was full of animal magnetism, and he felt it in others. The telepathic deck-steward, who spent his life in watching people and in forestalling their wants, with a view to gracious gratuities, summed up the situation. Two English, an impressive-looking man and an attractive girl, two chairs, a polite intimation that one of the chairs was vacant but available. The two men smiled at each other and the large man sat down.

"I hope you don't object?"

WARWICK DEEPING

contributes

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He raised his hat.

"My cigar, you know."

"If it is a good one."

He smiled, a large smile.

"It cost a shilling! My name's Burrell. You'll excuse my breeziness—but the sea. Yes, one loses a little of—what shall we call it?"

"Caution?"

"Oh, perhaps. Well, here we are. Looks like being a wee bit rough. I love it rough."

She was studying him with the air of a woman who thinks that she knows most things about men and horses and dogs.

"Obviously—you lose nothing else. My name is Mirlees. I am going to Casablanca. Now you know."

"Excellent. I'm Morocco bound, too."

"Pleasure or business?"

"Perhaps a bit of both. Business is pleasure. The Sultan, you know."

"I do know. People make money out of him. He has a passion for gramophones and clockwork toys."

"My dear Miss Mirlees!"

"You are not in the clockwork-toy department. You are what we call—excuse me—a concession-monger?"

"Let us call it a financier, a traveller, a collector."

"We are great collectors, we English. Yes, and here is another of us."

The third Briton had arrived. He was a smallish man, brown, clean-shaven, rather thin about the mouth and chin, and with a restless pair of grey eyes. He wore a brown ulster and a cap, the peak of which balanced his sharp chin like the upper peak of the new moon. He looked ill, or on the point of being ill, for his face had a grey harshness, and his cheeks were hollowed. Moreover, he did not fit the ship. He was the most obvious of landmen, shy of the sea, strange to it, vaguely discomforted, unsure, unhappy.

Mr. Burrell beamed. He enjoyed the superiority of the man with a steady stomach.

"A lost dog—what?"

"He looks ill."

"He is going to—be—ill. Poor devil! Now, what should you say he is?"

"I am not very curious."

There was a vacant space on the right-hand side of Miss Mirlees's chair, and this most unseaworthy person made a sign to

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the deck-steward that he wished to occupy that space. The steward humoured him, for some of his fattest tips came from the pockets of people who loathed the sea. The man in the ulster sat down on Miss Mirlees's right, threw one fiercely disgusted and pathetic glance at Mr. Burrell's cigar, and relapsed into a protective silence.

Burrell leant forward and spoke to him. His genial egotism could not resist a victim and the double stimulus of sympathizing with a victim.

"A bit breezy, sir."

"It is."

"The thing is to keep warm and out in the air. I used to know a man——"

He of the ulster gave him a savage look.

"Thanks. I'm a bad sailor. Need we discuss it?"

Mr. Burrell's smile included the girl.

"So was Nelson, my dear sir. If one feels a bit squeamish——"

The other groped in his ulster pocket, produced a book and proceeded to study it. His compressed lips were pale, his face a muddy grey, and his withdrawal behind his book was the closing of a door. Miss Mirlees, glancing casually at the book, recognized it as an Arabic dictionary. The discovery surprised her; but then the desire to acquire a knowledge of Arabic might be natural in a bagman as well as in a gentleman in the service of His Majesty King George.

The bell rang for lunch. Mr. Burrell was up and ready, undiscouraged by his repulse. His healthy appetite swaggered. He felt strong and adventurous.

"That's a good sound. I believe we are at the captain's table, Miss Mirlees."

His glance challenged the unseaworthy person to rise and be a man.

"Better to eat, sir."

The grey eyes gave him one fierce look.

"Damn you," they said; "damn the insolence of your big paunch. Go and feed."

They went, and the man in the ulster watched them go, and especially he watched the girl. "Mirlees." Could she be the daughter of Mirlees of Morocco, that great Frank whom the Moors delighted to honour? He had a letter of introduction to Alexander Mirlees.

He waited a while and then rose and followed them, throwing a look of hatred and loathing at the grey-green heave of the sea. There was more than hatred in his

eyes. There was fear in them, an instinctive and inevitable fear. He paused for a moment, and holding to the rail, glared down at the sea.

"Damn you!"

It was the defiance of a man who was afraid.

MR. CRADDOCK, for that was his name, found himself placed at the captain's table, and on Miss Mirlees's left, Burrell being on her right. They were surprised to see Craddock arrive with his tallow-coloured face and his air of striving to suppress an insurgent ghastliness. A discouraging table companion! Burrell gave the girl a sympathetic look, and hinted in an undertone that he might be able to arrange a reshuffling of the seats at the table. He was on very friendly terms with the captain. Great fellow, Captain Vandervorde. And he, Mr. Burrell, held a position in the world that made the captains of ships conceive it worth their while to be polite to him.

Miss Mirlees was discouraging. It is possible that she resented the assertive masculinity of the large man and his benignly protective air, for she was a woman who felt sure that she did not need protecting. The maleness of Burrell condescended. He called it chivalry.

Craddock was looking dubiously at his plate. Then, with a quick side-glance at his neighbours' plates, he began to eat as though he was making a deliberate conquest.

Miss Mirlees passed him the salt.

"Thank you."

He smiled slightly, and she felt sorry for him. He might be a very unseaworthy person, but he was less boring than Mr. Burrell.

"These Dutch lines are very well run."

He agreed; but she understood that his attention was not wholly hers, and that in certain circumstances the carrying on of a conversation might entail anguish. Though very self-assured, she was a woman, and her sense of humour was more delicate and sympathetic than Mr. Burrell's knock-about jocosity.

He was talking to the captain, and still advertising his own amazing seaworthiness and glorying in it.

"We may find things a bit dirty in the Bay, sir?"

Captain Vandervorde, a smooth, hairless, quiet man, who spoke very good English,

gave it as his opinion that the Bay might prove contentious.

"Well, it can't be too rough for me, sir. The rougher it gets, the better I like it. We sons of sea-dogs, you know!"

He laughed and poured more oil on his salad.

"I think Miss Mirlees here is a stout sea-lady. Won't turn a hair."

She eyed his salad disdainfully.

"I'm pretty tough, Mr. Burrell. You need not worry."

"I won't."

There was less wind next day, and the *Marsubia* steamed steadily towards the green Atlantic, a summer ship on a summer sea, the white boats on her davits flashing like white gulls. People grew more friendly, getting together into little groups and debating about deck games and card-tables and a possible dance. Yet the three English people held apart. Miss Mirlees did not want to bother, for what was the use of troubling about people whom you would never see again at the end of a week? Tangier was not India or Singapore.

"Life's too short," she said to Burrell, who came to try and persuade her to play deck-quoits. "I prefer to be lazy."

Mr. Craddock was in the next chair, diligently dipping into that Arabic dictionary, and still wearing his brown ulster. He and Meg Mirlees had not exchanged ten words; but Burrell did not know this, and being piqued by their propinquity, he deserted the crowd for the woman. He brought a novel and a cigar and an air of superabundant friendliness, and sat down beside her and talked.

He talked for effect, which was natural, seeing that he had an attractive girl beside him, and beyond her a sulky and reticent individual who kept his nose between the pages of his book. The unseaworthy person was a foil, and Burrell was ready to show him how much better able he was to please a woman.

He talked about his travels. Yes, he had been a great traveller, a thoroughly boring traveller, and Miss Mirlees was beginning to wish him at Jericho, when Mr. Craddock's quiet voice broke in.

"I don't think you are quite right about the ice on Lake Baikal."

"I beg your pardon!"

"The ice on Lake Baikal. And then—in Manchuria—you know."

"What about it?"

"I have been there. The Manchurian winters—"

Mr. Burrell leant forward in his chair.

"Do you mean to suggest that I haven't been there?"

"Not at all. I expect you passed through. I lived there for nearly a year."

There was a chilliness between them from that moment, and between the ice of two men who disliked each other Miss Mirlees lay poised in her deck-chair, a woman with the sunlight in her skin. She was amused. Mr. Burrell's adventurous reminiscences had been pulled up in the middle of the road, and he did not restart them, for he possessed a sort of elephantine cunning, and the little man in the ulster had a detached but attentive air. One of those nasty little fellows who wait around to catch you tripping. "All right, young fellow-my-lad!" So Mr. Burrell began to make love to the girl, for that was beyond Mr. Craddock's right of contradiction. It was a fact, and Mr. Burrell advertised it with genial truculence.

MR. CRADDOCK read his dictionary. Dull dog! Even when a certain restlessness became evident in the chair next to him he remained grim and absorbed and did not intervene. The challenge was obvious, but then Craddock hated the obvious. He had a temperament. Obviously the reasonable thing to do was to introduce himself to Mirlees's daughter, yet he did nothing of the kind. Moreover, he had reasons—reasons that would have caused the Burrell man to shout with laughter and to apply to an Arab horse the mentality of a bullock.

"Well, what about a game of quoits?"

She was bored with his persistence, and Burrell was blind to the fact that he was a bore, and, of course, that was why he was boring.

"If you can get any of these people to play."

"Oh, plenty. I had a party."

She sat up. Mr. Burrell would be even more breezy and genial in a crowd; but then she would share him with the crowd.

Craddock watched her walk away. He laid the Arabic dictionary on the deck and sat up with his elbows on his knees and his fists under his chin. For the moment he looked quite a different man—resolute, resourceful, aggressive. He stood up, walked over to the rail and stared at the sea.

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Such an amiable sea, so sinuous and kind that he wondered at his elemental fear of it. Yes, it was a beastly thing, fear, especially when it could be uncontrollable and obvious to other people. He had no wish for that girl to see him in one of his blue funks. A nice introduction, that, to Alexander Mirless!

He smiled. He knew himself to be a man who was a physical coward under certain conditions, and also the slave of a passionate moral courage. He rode his body like an ass, thumping it with his heels, driving it forward, compelling it to face the things from which it shrank. He had the soul of a Drake in the body of a poltroon.

"I think I'll leave it," he reflected, "leave it till I get ashore. With a little luck, I may make a decent showing. Anyway, she can think I am seasick. Not heroic, but natural."

THE Bay of Biscay proved boisterous, yet with a good-tempered, summer vigour that lacked the viciousness of winter. Its blue-green rollers gave the *Marsubia* an oily, staggering motion, and bunks were full and tables empty. Mr. Burrell promenaded, smoking many cigars and showing off his sea-legs and his bold Norse ancestry for the benefit of Miss Mirless, who was quailless and serene. Mr. Craddock had disappeared, and at each meal Mr. Burrell would give his neighbour a sly look and exult in Mr. Craddock's unseaworthiness.

He would hum the old song, "In the Bay of Biscay—o," and he would repeat the "o," lengthening it into a moan of anguish. "That's the note. Poor fellow! I imagine he wishes himself back with the Chinks." His humour grew so coarsely physical that Miss Mirless disliked him with an acuteness that became snubbing. The rough weather appeared to stimulate the boastful stomach of the man, and she tried to chasten it by seriously stating that people with brains were bad sailors. If you had no brains, the movement of the sea did not matter.

He looked at her benignantly.

"Then we must be the exceptions."

"I thought you would say that. Dull people are always exceptional, I suppose."

"A little peevish to-day. I hope you are not feeling—"

"I'm bored."

One had to use a hammer on the head of such an ox.

But the shell of him was not so thick as to be utterly impervious to criticism. Miss Mirless was bored. His infinite good temper shrugged off the personal accusation, and set him exploring new sources of amusement. He preferred women who were "difficult," women with uncertain tempers.

Mr. Burrell was a conscious humorist, and by some coincidence he did discover on the *Marsubia* a jest that was worth developing. It happened that he found a certain person in an obscure corner of one of the decks when that person was supposed to be in his bunk, petitioning the gods with groans. Mr. Burrell played the cat-and-mouse game. He grew interested, puzzled. He wanted to be sure of his facts before he announced them and challenged deductions. His observations lasted over one whole day.

He sprang the jest on Miss Mirless, after breakfast, with green rollers-sweeping by, and the wind making a cheerful snoring through the ship's gear.

"I say, I have found out a funny thing."

She turned the pages of the book, and her "Oh, have you?" sounded apathetic.

"Remember that fellow in the ulster?"

"Well, it is not very long since—"

"No. But he wasn't at breakfast, was he?"

"I did not observe him."

"He has missed the last six meals. That's correct?"

"Apparently."

Mr. Burrell began to chortle and to rock in his chair.

"Presumably sick—groaning in his bunk, whimpering: 'Steward—steward!' That's what we thought."

She caught him up. This man seemed to be a creature of one idea, and at sea his idea of humour circulated around the insecurity of other people's meals. But he could rouse other feelings of nausea.

"You—thought. It seems to be an obsession. Why not leave the man's unseaworthiness alone?"

He seized the dramatic moment.

"But that's the point. He's not sick."

"Well, where is the catch?"

"It's a bit of a conundrum. But I'll tell you what I think. He's frightened."

He had scored, but she would not let him enjoy the glory of it. Besides, another man's fear was not a thing to be chuckled over. Either it was pathetic or it was nasty.

"Oh, what makes you think that?"

"He was on deck all yesterday, squatting

on a coil of rope behind one of the boats."

"Why shouldn't he?"

"But that's the point. If you are not sick—you don't hide. Where's the motive? Besides, I've seen his face. I should call it the face of a chap who was in a blue funk."

She frowned slightly.

"Why?"

"Well—why? That's the point. Let's take it that he is afraid of the sea, that he can't go below, but must squat by one of the boats, so as to be ready."

"That's absurd."

"He is there now. If you don't believe it, go and look."

She was interested, and it was no mean curiosity that made her take up Burrell's challenge; moreover, she would discover pleasure in proving him wrong. So, having inquired as to the whereabouts of Mr. Craddock's coil of rope, she set out to observe him. He was wedged between two in-swung boats, squatting on the coiled rope, with that eternal Arabic dictionary on his knees. He was wearing his ulster, with the collar of it turned up, and yet he looked cold, like a man who had prickles of chilliness down his back; and for a full quarter of a minute she was able to observe him—before his pinched face was suddenly lifted.

"Of course," she thought, "he has had malaria. That's it."

Yet, a moment later, she was doubting the correctness of her explanation. A man did not shiver with his eyes.

"Good morning."

It was he who spoke, and his jaw seemed to move stiffly. She had the feeling that he was trying to control something. Was it fear, and if so—fear of what?

"You have found a snug place there. We thought—"

"Sea-sick! One prefers to be alone."

"Naturally."

She turned as though to leave him in peace, and then hesitated and stood regarding him.

"Are you sure you are not ill? Really ill—I mean?"

She fancied that his grey face flushed slightly.

"No. I am quite all right, thank you."

She walked away, puzzled, but not wishing to give Mr. Burrell any cause for elation, she asserted that it was obvious that Mr. Craddock was suffering from chronic malaria. "It recurs, you know, especially

in cold weather. Besides, he appears to have travelled a good deal."

Burrell was coarsely sceptical.

"I think I know when a man's in a blue funk."

"But what has he to fear? The idea's absurd."

"Let's leave it at that," said he; "but I may have a chance of proving that I am right."

THE *Marsubia* had turned her stern to the sunset, and was steaming towards the straits when Miss Mirlees found herself in the neighbourhood of Craddock's lurking-place between the two boats. The sky was all yellow and red above the green heave of the sea, and between the white bellies of the two boats she saw the slight figure of the man wrapped in its bronze-coloured ulster. She had a feeling that he had been there ever since the morning, and that he had had no food. His face had an ascetic and bloodless pallor; it was like an ivory mask against the extravagant colour of the sky.

Their eyes met. She thought that she detected defiance in his, while he discovered a tremor of pity in hers. The idea of her pity annoyed him.

"Rather a fine sky."

She rested her hands on the gunwale of one of the boats.

"These sea sunsets are splendid. Give me the desert and the sea for sunsets."

He nodded, but his eyes were on the defensive.

"Or an ice-floe."

"I have never seen an ice-floe. Have you?"

"Once or twice."

She knew that he was speaking the truth. Somehow, she felt that she would believe what he said, while she would always suspect Burrell of lying. Why was it? Craddock was a most unconvincing figure, and yet he convinced. He gave her a sense of something finely and tensely strong. He was not obvious. She liked his eyes, trusted them.

She was gazing in the direction of the African coast.

"You must have travelled a good deal."

"I have."

"You like it?"

"Hate it."

Her eyes fell suddenly to his.

"Then it's a matter of necessity?"

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"In a sense, yes."

So he was in business of some kind. She was disappointed. A moment later, she caught him with a queer smile lurking about his mouth.

"We ought to be ashore to-morrow."

"Tangier?"

"Are you landing there?"

"Yes."

"Beastly place."

He ventured another question.

"You are going on?"

"Yes, to Casablanca."

"So am I."

She was surprised. What on earth was he going to do at Casablanca? Trade?

"Are you going by boat?"

His eyelids flickered.

"Is there a boat? I thought——"

"A tub from Tangier to Larache and Rabat. Saves time and trouble. You can get a donkey or a horse."

"Perhaps I'll try it. It sounds easier."

"It is."

They came to a sudden end of the parley and she drifted away, and, hearing the dinner-bell, went down to the saloon. Mr. Burrell was there; but she sat down as though the large man did not exist.

"The captain says that he will put us off to-morrow morning."

He was glancing past her at Craddock's vacant seat.

"I suppose so."

"Our friend must eat that dictionary of his. Rather dry diet."

"Some people prefer it. I think I do."

There was a movement behind them, and Craddock slipped into his seat, spread his table-napkin, and picked up a menu-card. Burrell's face grew sly and whimsical. He nudged Miss Mirlees.

"What did I say?"

She ignored him and, turning slightly towards Craddock, made it as plain as a woman could that she wished him to talk to her. Her motive was a double one. She desired to snub Mr. Burrell and to find out what Craddock's business was at Casablanca.

She did not find out. He was politely elusive, and he appeared to be hungry, and, realizing his hunger, she had pity on him and suffered the conversation to go on disjointedly; but she cold-shouldered Mr. Burrell. One fact she did bring to light, that this was Craddock's first visit to Morocco, though he knew Algeria and

Egypt. Burrell, who was listening, boomed in upon them.

Miss Mirlees let a moment of silence pass, and then, as though Mr. Burrell's interruption had been nothing but a very boring interlude, she resumed her conversation with Mr. Craddock.

"Do you know anything about Egyptology?"

"Yes, a little."

"Let us try that."

Their eyes met with a glimmer of mutual understanding.

THE sea was an intense blue and reasonably calm when the *Marsubia* landed them and their baggage at Tangier. The flickering blue water in the harbour was like watered silk spread below the white and yellow houses. It played in a more brilliant blue about the boats and lighters; and on the quays merchandise lay piled, with little figures in red and blue and white moving hither and thither. Mr. Burrell stood up in the barge, smoking his cigar, and let his red and genial face shine upon Africa. Craddock was sitting on his trunk. His name was painted on the lid in black letters, but since he was sitting on the middle of it, Miss Mirlees's curiosity was balked for the time being. His name began with a C and ended with a K. That was all that she could read.

Mr. Burrell waxed conversational.

"Now, for the mob, what! Half the spongers and rogues in Tangier. Say, Miss Mirlees, do you happen to know of a hotel where one is not bitten?"

"I do not," said she.

The crowd awaited them, an absurdly eager crowd of Arabs, Jews and blacks, yelling, gesticulating, offering to handle baggage, to act as guides, to carry through any swindle that such a town can render possible. They resembled a pack of cringing, yelping, grinning dogs. They fell upon Mr. Burrell, because he looked the largest and the richest and the most squeezable of the landing party. They clutched him; they jabbered; they began to quarrel over him and his belongings.

A hook-nosed little Scotsman and a couple of negro servants, using inconsiderate feet and elbows, had pushed through the rabble to meet Miss Mirlees.

"Glad to see you, Macpherson. How is my father?"

"Very well, miss. He sent me to meet you, because he has had to go south on business. I have rooms booked at Miguel's Hotel."

"Good."

She looked round for Craddock. He had engaged a couple of porters, and was shrugging off the rest with smiling contempt.

"Mr. Craddock."

He turned sharply. So she had got his name!

"Miguel's is the best place. Perhaps you know."

He raised his hat.

"Thank you. I will try Miguel's."

Mr. Burrell was still involved in a sort of dog-fight, and as Meg Mirless followed the two negroes who cleared a path for her she had a glimpse of Mr. Burrell's face, very red and indignant under the brim of his Panama hat. He was shouting in English, but without the least effect. He had lost his temper. He was damning right and left, and trying to rescue a dispatch-box that had involved two Arabs in a scuffle. A little hairy Jew was hanging on to his coat-tails and squeaking at him in bastard English.

Meg Mirless caught Craddock's eyes. She went through the crowd, laughing, with Mr. Macpherson at her heels, a man coldly truculent and full of incisive authority. Craddock and his porters followed. He had discarded his ulster, and he walked with his head up, eyes alert and smiling, his feet on the solid earth.

"She has got my name," he thought. "Shall I tell her who I am? Or shall I wait till I meet the great Alexander? By Jove, but she is splendid."

She went ahead of him through the multi-coloured crowd, and the warm and adventurous fancy of him likened her to a white plume waving a man forward in the storm of a cavalry charge.

Miguel's was kept by a Spaniard, and it was located in a big Moorish house that had been adapted to serve European needs. Miguel himself met them in the courtyard, a very tall and dignified Spaniard with a high, melancholy forehead, a Don Quixote turned hotelier. He bowed. The daughter of the great Alexander Mirless was a serene and sacred lady.

He bowed less deeply to Craddock.

"The señora would eat?"

"At once, Señor Miguel."

"Alone?"

But Miguel had a quick, black eye, and he understood that neither Mr. Craddock nor Miss Mirless would be offended if they found themselves at the same table. It was done. Their table was set at one of the arcaded windows of the gallery surrounding the courtyard, and Craddock had ordered a bottle of Spanish wine.

Her eyes had an expectant look. Or, rather, there was the suggestion of a serene and self-confident command in them. "Your name is Craddock," they said, "and you are travelling to Casablanca. I, Miss Meg Mirless, have permitted you to sit down at the same table with me. Now, my friend, I expect you to explain yourself." He sensed this at the back of her eyes. He was burning to put himself on more intimate and impressive terms with her. He did not wish her to consider him to be a sort of cosmopolitan bagman. On the *Marsubia* he had cut a very poor figure, a despicable figure.

He hesitated. He was remembering that he still had to negotiate that damned sea-passage to Rabat in some greasy, floundering "coaster." He dreaded it. He would have preferred mules and horses; but, then, she had proposed the "coaster."

"I'll wait," he said to himself, and raised the bottle to offer her wine.

"May I give you some?"

She looked him full in the eyes.

"Thank you—I think—not."

HER meaning was very clear to him. She did not accept wine from comparative strangers—unless . . . He replaced the bottle on the table.

"We seem to have lost our travelling companion."

The poise of her head was impartial.

"Perhaps. You understand how to travel."

"A little."

"It requires some experience."

"It does."

Her dark eyes swept his, challenged them, and returned to gaze upon the courtyard. His resolution wavered, and then held firm.

"The thing is—never to get flustered."

"Or to give yourself away."

He was trying to think of some graciously defensive retort when Mr. Burrell arrived in the courtyard of the hotel. He came with noise and confusion, like a very big

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and angry man jabbing at a cloud of flies on a boiling day. Half the harbour loafers of Tangier seemed to have come with him. At least a dozen of them were carrying his trunk, and every article of baggage he possessed was a source of contention and a cause of strife.

Mr. Burrell plunged his way out of the crowd, and left them to be dealt with by Miguel.

"Here, pay the blackguards. The place is a den of thieves. I'll settle in the bill."

He caught sight of Miss Mirlees and Craddock up above, and came steaming up to them.

"Well, I've got here, and kept my temper—somehow."

"Won't you join us?"

"Charmed—I'm sure."

And for the rest of the meal Craddock was able to meditate upon Miss Mirlees's cool graciousness to Mr. Burrell.

NEXT day they boarded the *Santissima Isabella*, a most unsanctified tub of a boat, with her upper works painted a bilious yellow, and her hull and her paddle-wheels green. She was dirty. The smell from her engines wrestled with the smell from the cook's galley, and her saloon—such as it was—suggested stale bread and garlic. Miss Mirlees was given the only respectable cabin, and Craddock, finding himself cooped up to sleep with Mr. Burrell and two French commercial travellers, decided to spread a rug on deck.

He approached the capable Macpherson.

"How long will this trip last? About a day?"

Macpherson tickled an eyebrow.

"That will depend on the Atlantic Ocean and this tub's engine."

"But the weather looks set fair."

"The Atlantic will give us a swell, sir, wind or no wind. I've known this trip last seven days."

Craddock felt depressed. Miss Mirlees had treated him with some coolness, and his self-respect, and much more than his self-respect, had become involved in her attitude towards him. He had begun to care, and to care with an acuteness that astonished him. Like life, she challenged his courage, and Craddock was a passionate lover of life.

Her cool impartiality drove him towards the realization of her as a woman who could

be utterly impartial. That ivory shell of her! Yes, he knew her intuitively, the real Meg Mirlees, the woman whose love would be a fierce and resolute tenderness.

Meanwhile, he saw her sitting under a meagre canvas awning, suffering the large egotisms of Mr. Burrell, and suffering them with apparent resignation. Mr. Burrell had appropriated her. He was in really great form. He was consciously excluding Craddock, and gloating over it; and Craddock, being recklessly sensitive, accepted the exclusion. He had moods of fierce haughtiness.

"Compete with that fellow! No, I'm damned if I will."

Therefore he held aloof, and talked to Mr. Macpherson and to the little Spaniard who captained the *Santissima Isabella*. The pinched look returned to his face, and when the yellow and green tub put to sea he found an isolated corner on deck and withdrew himself.

Now, all the awkwardness that was inherent in the temperament and the mental make-up of him came in very handy to Mr. Burrell. The big man was still pushing his theory, obstinately and cheerfully intent upon proving its correctness to Miss Mirlees; and since he was arguing a question that had become of intimate personal significance to her, she suffered him and even encouraged him by appearing to disagree.

Burrell, with the British love of putting his money on a prejudice or an opinion, offered to risk a bet on it.

"Look here, I'll lay you a wager."

Mr. Macpherson was leaning over the rail, and Burrell called him up, and, looking shrewd and sly, began to cross-question the Scotsman.

"What sort of landing shall we make at this place—Rabat, or whatever you call it?"

"That will depend on the swell, sir."

"A little uncomfortable?"

"All this coast, sir, is excessively uncomfortable. The Atlantic swell hits it. And at Rabat there is a bar."

"Takes some getting over in an open boat?"

"Sometimes you don't get over it. I have seen a surf-boat, sir, rolled over like a porpoise."

Mr. Burrell smiled.

"I rather enjoy that sort of thing. Thank you, Mr. Macpherson."

When the Scotsman had strolled away Burrell put his case to Miss Mirlees.

"Now, I will bet you—well, what shall it be?"

"Never mind about the stakes," replied the girl.

"Well, I bet you, Miss Mirlees, that if we have a nasty time getting over that bar at Rabat, our friend there will hoist the white flag."

"I take the bet."

"Done."

The *Santissima Isabella* lay rolling and pitching off Rabat on the green edge of the Atlantic. Between Rabat and the fort of Sali a line of white surf foamed over the bar. The *Santissima Isabella* had been hove-to for almost an hour.

The captain, who had been signalling to the harbour-master, came down from his little bridge and joined the group on the deck. Burrell was talking to Miss Mirlees; the two French commercial travellers were creatures of misery; Craddock was leaning over the rail beside Mr. Macpherson.

The captain addressed himself to Miss Mirlees.

"They say there is too much surf on the bar for a barge to put out."

"Nonsense," said she.

The Spaniard shrugged.

"This swell may hold for days. It would be wiser to put back to Larache."

Burrell and Miss Mirlees protested.

"I have landed in worse seas than that. How much did you offer the harbour-master, captain?"

"Twenty dollars."

"Make it thirty. How many are there of us? Five. That's only six dollars apiece."

Burrell was smiling.

"What about putting it to the vote? Hands up, gentlemen."

He glanced at Craddock and then at the Frenchmen.

"It is worth a little risk, getting away from this swell—what?"

Craddock did not appear to hear, for he remained leaning over the rail, staring at the white houses of Rabat. The adventure had to be explained to the two Frenchmen, and the prospect of escaping ashore, away from the heaving misery of the *Santissima Isabella*, opened to them the gates of paradise.

"If I drown, I drown, monsieur. What does it matter?"

"Splendid. That's a majority. What do you say, Mr. Craddock?"

Craddock replied with a slight turn of the head.

"Does it matter?"

Burrell threw his head back, and gave a noiseless laugh. His eyes railed Miss Mirlees.

"The decision is to risk it. Of course, anybody can go back to Larache—if they want to. Go and signal them again, captain."

There followed an interval of waiting. The baggage had been brought on deck, and the two Frenchmen lay huddled in it and on it. Mr. Macpherson walked restlessly up and down. Craddock remained leaning over the rail, eyes set upon Rabat, his face pinched and

peaky. To one of the onlookers he gave the impression of a man who was paralysed, both unable and afraid to move.

Burrell and Miss Mirlees strolled towards the bridge. He glanced down at her triumphantly, and she hated him.

"The odds are in my favour."

"How?"

"Why, it's obvious. He is going to funk it."

"I have seen no signs—"

"Why, the chap's like a scared rabbit; he daren't move."

She said nothing. They turned and stood side by side, watching the line of surf at

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the bar, Mr. Burrell red and cheerful and confident, the girl cold and haughty. They were in conflict, silent human conflict, and she was full of the stirrings of a baffled anger. She felt that if Craddock showed fear she could use the lash of her scorn on him.

"Hallo! The bribe has worked."

Burrell pointed with the stump of his cigar, and she saw a barge full of rowers making for the bar. The steersman was standing up in the stern-sheets, and with each stroke of the oars he bent forward and uttered a shrill cry. The barge laboured like a great beetle on its slowly-moving legs, and when it reached the line of surf its nose seemed to disappear and then to rise high in the air.

"By Jove, she is going to be swamped!"

They heard a wail from the Arab rowers. The steersman, like a man balancing himself on the back of a horse, was calling on Allah, and cursing the men. They stuck to it. The barge came wallowing out of the spume down the back of a green roller, climbed the next one and the next, and was clear of the bar.

"Splendid!" said Mr. Burrell, putting his cigar back into his mouth. "That must have given our friend the shivers."

THE barge drew alongside the steamer, the Arab boatmen standing up and shouting and showing their white teeth. The barge had shipped a good deal of water, and two of the crew were baling hard. A seaman threw a rope from the *Santissima Isabella*, and a crazy rope ladder was flung over the side.

"Baggage first."

"Then the Frenchmen."

The baggage and the men of commerce were embarked amid much shouting and scrambling. Burrell was watching Craddock, who had not shifted his position, and Miss Mirlees was watching both of them.

"Coming, Mr. Craddock?"

She swung herself on to the rope ladder, descended it, and, waiting her chance, dropped into the barge, where two of the boatmen caught her. Burrell was preparing to follow her, a smile on his red face.

"Your baggage is down below, Craddock. Of course, if you are going back to Larache—"

Craddock stirred. He moved stiffly, with a queer jerkiness, rather like a mechanical

figure, and giving the impression that he was making an immense inward effort to compel his body to obey his will. He followed Burrell down the ladder, clutching the rungs with nervous fingers. He seemed to have lost his sense of judgment, for he made his drop at the wrong moment, when the barge was sinking into the trough of a wave. A big Arab caught him and saved him from going overboard, but Craddock's clumsiness sent them both rolling amid the baggage and the two sick Frenchmen.

Burrell laughed, but Meg Mirlees had watched the affair with an air of incredulous anger. She was a white woman, and she had prejudices in the matter of courage when a white man had to keep his dignity and his self-respect in the presence of brown or yellow men. She saw Craddock helped up by the Arab, and placed upon a seat. He clutched it with both hands. The barge had cast off from the steamer, and the rowers were beginning to tug at their oars.

She was conscious of pity, anger and scorn. She could not bring herself to look at Craddock, but sat stiffly in the stern-sheets, her eyes fixed upon the line of white foam between Sali and Rabat. She was unaware of any sense of danger, of the fact that they were about to risk their lives in the surf. She was conscious only of a man's fear, and of the way he was betraying that fear. It hurt her.

They were nearing the bar, and the rowers began to sing in chorus. Burrell had placed himself near Craddock, who sat rigid, clutching the thwart, and for one moment Miss Mirlees allowed herself a glance at the two men. She met Burrell's eyes, shrewdly smiling. The stump of the cigar was between his teeth.

"Well, what about it?"

That was the question his triumphant and ironical smile asked her.

"He may be a coward," was her inward retort, "but you are a cad."

The green back of a great roller heaved them towards the line of surf. The barge rose, sank, wallowed, with a second great wave looming over its stern. The sea boiled white about them. The steersman uttered a loud cry, and the rowers, answering it with an echoing cry, laboured at their oars. Suddenly, Craddock started up.

"Look out!"

Burrell caught him and pulled him down.

"Sit still, man; sit still."

Miss Mirlees, one hand clutching the

gunwale, fixed her eyes on the walls of the town.

Next moment they were over the bar, and the Arabs were laughing and chattering like a lot of boys. Burrell still had his hand on Craddock's arm, a Craddock who was both limp and rigid, with conscious misery in his eyes.

They landed. Miss Mirlees was the first to step ashore. Burrell and Mr. Macpherson followed her. Craddock had not moved. He seemed held there by shackles of humiliation.

Burrell was smiling.

"Well, what about it?"

She gave him a look of scorn.

"Yes, I think you have won your bet."

THERE was but one hotel at Rabat where the beds were reasonably clean, and Craddock was left on the quay to choose between the *Hôtel des Etrangers*, where Miss Mirlees would be spending the night, and some ramshackle inn, where he would provide a meal for sundry enthusiastic insects. He stood there in the glare of the sun, with the salt spume still on his lips, and a fury of shame in his heart. Porters and guides importuned him, and he did not seem to hear them.

"I suppose she could never understand?" he thought.

Followed the swift and fierce challenge: "Make her understand. Face it."

He decided to face it. He engaged two Arabs to carry his baggage, and told them to lead on to the *Hôtel des Etrangers*.

It was a poor place, but clean, kept by a Frenchman and his wife, and it had a garden, upon which the latticed windows opened, cool with the shade of orange-trees and figs. Vines scrambled over a rude loggia, where tables were set, forming an open-air *salle à manger*. Craddock was shown to his room. He sat down on a stool by the window, and from below came the voices of the people who were taking their midday meal in the loggia. He recognized Burrell's voice talking cheerily to someone, and the gay patter of the two French bagmen.

Craddock had to force himself to go down, and in this loggia of the *Hôtel des Etrangers* he was thrust by a smiling little Frenchwoman into the very arms of the ordeal. There was but one table vacant, and it stood

at the far end of the loggia, and next the place where Miss Mirlees was seated.

"*Voilà, monsieur.*"

Craddock walked towards the vacant table. He noticed that Miss Mirlees's eyes did not avoid him; they caught him waist high and looked through him as he walked towards her. Her face was calm and dispassionate.

He sat down, unfolded his serviette, and ordered wine. Burrell was at the farther end, eating joyously and talking to Mr. Macpherson. Craddock stared at him. He hated Burrell, and despised himself for hating him.

He realized that he had to say something to Miss Mirlees.

"Rather pleasant here."

There was a moment of silence before she replied, and her voice was casual.

"Quite."

"I suppose one can hire horses and mules in Rabat?"

"It is probable. Ask Mr. Macpherson; he will know."

He felt the cold bite of her disfavour. He had expected it, but it roused in him a fierce protest. He prepared to attack.

"Thank you. I hope to call on Mr. Mirlees at Casablanca."

"Indeed!"

"I have a letter of introduction to him from Sir Guy Dearmer."

He had turned in his chair, as though compelling himself to face her.

"Sir Guy Dearmer? Let me see, your name is Craddock."

"Yes—Lionel Craddock."

He became aware of the veiled and questioning surprise in her eyes. She refilled her wineglass and raised the glass to her lips, holding it poised as though to test the bouquet of the wine. Her attitude remained deliberately casual, but behind it he sensed a rapid questioning of his identity.

"Not—the—Mr. Lionel Craddock? The man who went with a Japanese storming-party in the attack on Port Arthur? The Craddock of Mexico and Cuba? No, of course you could not be."

She glanced across at him over the wineglass, drank, and set the glass down. He was resting his elbows on the table, and his eyes observed her with a resolute and faintly ironical smile. Obviously, he could not be himself, because she thought him a coward.

"But I am that Craddock."

She met his eyes, and she, too, was ironical.

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"Indeed!"

"Why should you doubt it?"

"Do I doubt it?"

"Evidently."

She went on with her meal, and he remembered that he had food in front of him.

"But the Craddock, whose books I have read. . . . Yes, perhaps the books were a little romantic."

"They were true."

She crumbled a piece of bread, as though pausing for reflection.

"But the facts don't tally."

"You mean that the Craddock you had in your mind could not have been a coward?"

"I suppose so."

"Thank you."

He was smiling, but his smile had a grim edge to it.

"Miss Mirlees, what are courage and cowardice?"

"Isn't it a question of self-respect?"

"More than that. Sensitiveness, imagination. You may think that man over there brave because he is insensitive and does not feel things. And yet in certain circumstances he might play the coward."

"Does that concern us?"

"No, perhaps not. Well, I am a coward."

She retained her dispassionate air, though the human reality of the affair was pressing against the cold surface of her self-assurance. How could a man confess himself a coward, and how could she respect such a man? She might pity him. And all the while Craddock was watching her, throwing a swift and occasional glance in her direction that was like the revealing knife of a surgeon. His intuition cut deep, opened the heart of things.

"Pity is of no use to me."

She was startled. How did he know that she was pitying him? Besides, he was claiming too intimate an interest.

"Really! It had not occurred to me."

"I think it had. But pity—that sort of pity! Pity is of no use. One asks for understanding."

She gave him a full glance of the eyes.

"Is it necessary?"

"Everyone has a right to be understood, especially—"

"Especially?"

"By people who are very sure of themselves. It is good for such people. I take it that you have never known fear."

"I cannot say that I have."

"You have yet to meet it. And when it comes you will have to struggle with it. Then you may understand."

She flushed. For it seemed to her that this man was reversing the situation. He was turning her legitimate disapproval into a confession of hardness and of inexperience. He was preaching at her, setting himself up as a sort of hero who was proud of the anguish he suffered in running away.

"So I am not very intelligent?"

"No. There is something that you have not experienced. You do not understand it."

"I must confess, Mr. Craddock, that I cannot understand a man allowing an Arab crew—"

"You cannot understand that it was beastly, horrible for me. Have you ever heard of uncontrollable fear, of the night terrors of children? You have. And yet you cannot understand that such terror—fear of some particular thing, might persist in a man or a woman? With me it has a history. As a child I went through a typhoon, and ever afterwards the sea became my terror. Sometimes I beat it; sometimes it beats me. But some people refuse to be shown the whole of life, its rotten, sorry, pathetic side. They want it ripe and polished like the good half of an apple."

He turned away from her as though he had delivered his soul, and she sat very still, looking out into the garden, hesitating between anger and the impulse of other emotions. He had touched her. He had struck her. Her pride had a hot and sensitive cheek.

"I'm sorry," she said presently.

His retort was swift and fierce.

"For me?"

"Partly."

"I do not wish you to be sorry in that way. If I have to do things, in spite of myself, the doing of them is all that matters."

She was silent, and her silence suggested a complex of feelings and impressions. She was hostile, wilfully hostile.

He pushed back his chair and rose.

"I shall present that letter to your father, Miss Mirlees. Good morning. Perhaps we shall meet at Casablanca."

DURING the journey from Rabat to Casablanca she told herself that she did not wish to meet him again. He was one of those problem men, awkward, difficult,

unsatisfactory. She thought that she preferred a simpler and less complex animal.

She had not seen him since he had walked away from her table in the loggia of the hotel at Rabat, for he had gone out into the town, hired horses, a guide, a servant and two mules, and set out immediately for Casablanca.

Yet Meg Mirlees found herself thinking of him as an interesting personality. He had impressed himself more deeply upon her than she would allow, nor could she help realizing that there was a fineness in the temper of the man, a passionate, inward courage that went out to meet and fight its fear. And sometimes he was worsted, humiliated, made to suffer.

But then the things that he had done, the recklessness of some of his accomplishments. She did not doubt the truth of his adventures. He was not a boaster, nor one of those ingenious cheap-jack travellers who rush hurriedly through some country and return to write it up and advertise their audacity. He had done extraordinary things, this little, highly-strung, sensitive man, greatly valiant in the midst of his fears and tremblings.

She found that he had touched her most strangely.

But could she trust him? There was something in her, some feminine prejudice against a man who might fail in a desperate crisis.

Later she realized that she might have to see him again! Alexander Mirlees was the most hospitable of men. He liked strangers who had fought and hunted and wandered. She knew that he would not leave a man like Craddock stewing in some semi-white caravanserai of an hotel. The house of her father would be open to him.

She was vaguely excited, challenged. Should she tell Alexander Mirlees the truth, and persuade him to keep Craddock on the most formal of terms? A call, a dinner, one or two casual civilities, and then a casual departure. Should she meet him calmly as an ordinary acquaintance? Yes, that was the trouble. She sensed the fact that she might not be able to meet him calmly, and the discovery spurred a rather wilful pride.

"Let him come," she said to herself. "What does it matter?"

So Meg Mirlees and Mr. Macpherson and her men entered Casablanca when the sun was setting over the sea. The sights and smells of the Moorish town were pleasantly

familiar. She wondered why Craddock had come to Casablanca. Nothing happened here, nothing to experience or to write about. She entered her father's house, that very spacious Moorish house with its garden under the town wall. He was there at the gate, waiting for her, a gaillard, handsome, powerful man with the head of a grandee and eyes that were quite fearless.

"Well, Meg, old girl, this is good."

She realized this man's strength and loved it, for it was said of Alexander Mirlees that he had never failed. The tribesmen trusted him.

"And how is everybody in the Old Country?"

"They never change. Mr. Macpherson has been telling me that the Arabs have been letting off a little powder."

Mirlees laughed.

"Just bad boys. Though Mr. Macpherson is inclined to take things a little too seriously. The French have been building a railway line here, and it has given the children a chance to throw stones."

"No more than that?"

"Oh, there is nothing in it."

SHE went into the courtyard with his arm about her.

"By the way, I have had a visitor, Craddock, the explorer, an interesting little chap. I think you met him on the boat?"

"Yes."

"I asked him to stay, but he seems a queer and independent beggar."

"He prefers the hotel?"

"It seems so. I have asked him to dine here to-morrow night."

Meg could not decide whether she was pleased or displeased, but when Craddock came she met him as a casual acquaintance who was her father's guest, and Craddock matched her aloofness. He was courteous, a little distant, and different. The difference of him piqued her. He was quite at his ease; he met her eyes with complete composure; he talked well and without any posing for effect. The party included two other men, and the thing that surprised Meg Mirlees was Craddock's air of dominance, for he was the central figure, the man of the moment.

The conversation turned upon the unrest among the tribes. They had been levying blackmail on Casablanca, and a weak Moorish governor had given way to them. There

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was a strong anti-French feeling among the Arabs, and Abdul Aziz, the Sultan, had sent a body of troops under Moulaï el Amin to watch these restless tribesmen. They were camped outside the town. Mirlees, who was popular with the Arabs, refused to take the matter very seriously. They were no more than a crowd of wild boys who must show their high spirits by firing their guns into the air.

Meg Mirlees was astonished to hear Craddock disagreeing with her father.

"There is a good deal of anxiety in the town."

Mirlees laughed.

"Call it funk, my dear Craddock. You have been listening to some of the nervous gentlemen."

Her eyes met Craddock's. She saw him smile faintly, and his smile was a challenge. "Perhaps you have told your father," it said. "If not, you may tell him, if you wish to."

The smile she returned him was ironical.

"Mr. Craddock seems to have formed his opinion very quickly. Is it possible to know so much in two days?"

"Oh, come, Meg! Craddock is an expert at getting impressions."

"Yes, I think that's it, Mr. Mirlees. I do get impressions, and I get them very quickly."

At the end of the meal she left the men together and wandered out into the coolness of the garden. There was a seat there under a vine, a hidden and secret seat, secure from all strangers, and in her perverseness she decided to remain in this dusky nook until Lionel Craddock had gone. But Craddock sought her there.

"Miss Mirlees, I have just heard that your father proposes to go to Mazaglan and Mogador. Persuade him not to go."

"Why?"

"Because I feel that he ought not to leave you here. Macpherson is going with him. He does not take the Arabs seriously."

"Nor do I."

"Then go with Mr. Mirlees."

She rose from the seat.

"Really, Mr. Craddock, I believe you are trying to make a coward of me. Is it necessary? I shall stay here, just to test the value of your impressions."

He stood aside.

"I'm sorry. Why make it a personal matter?"

"I assure you my curiosity is quite impersonal."

"Then perhaps you will let me speak to your father?"

"Would not that be rather impertinent, when my father has known Morocco for twenty years?"

"I admit the apparent impertinence. But, believe me, Miss Mirlees, sometimes when one comes fresh to a place one picks up the atmosphere."

"Or imports one's own atmosphere. May I say that I should resent your interference?"

SO Alexander Mirlees set out for Mogador, but Craddock remained at Casablanca, refusing Mirlees's suggestion that he should accompany him and Mr. Macpherson and profit by another man's knowledge of the country. The little hotel, kept by a fine fellow of a Spaniard, suited Craddock admirably. It was clean and it was fairly comfortable, and the Spaniard was a man of parts, a stout fellow of great shrewdness and courage. Craddock spent his time in exploring Casablanca and in improving his Arabic.

For a week he did not go near the house of the Mirleeses, but his restraint was purposeful and full of sagacity.

On the eighth day he pulled the iron chain of the Mirleeses' bell and stood waiting outside the massive door. A negro opened it to him; the black could speak English.

Craddock sent in his card. He was left waiting in the handsome courtyard, with its fountain, and its arcaded galleries, and its beds of carefully-watered flowers. In a minute the negro returned and, salaaming, desired Craddock to follow him.

Meg Mirlees received Craddock in a room that was part boudoir, part library. There was a divan by the screened window, and beside it an Oriental stool bearing a large brass tray. The room was full of books, hunting trophies and arms. It was the room of a woman who could ride and shoot.

She made a sign to Craddock to join her on the divan.

"Sambo is bringing tea. So you are still in Casablanca? And you have discovered no excitements yet? The place seems quite tame."

"I should not say that."

"You are still reacting to atmospheres?"

"Certainly."

She laughed, but her laughter was friendly.

"Do you still believe that something is going to happen here?"

"I do."

"Something terrible?"

"Perhaps."

"Then it is rather brave of you to stay."

"That is no reason."

"No?"

"I feel responsible."

"Indeed! For what?"

"The obstinacy I appear to have provoked in you. Besides, I prefer to stay."

The negro brought in tea, and as she handed Craddock his cup she gave him a look of irony and of humour.

"You accuse me of obstinacy, and your real reason for staying here is to prove me wrong."

He appeared intent upon his teacup.

"Think that if it pleases you."

"I shall."

"But it is not the true reason. One does not ask to see a town converted into a temporary hell in order to be able to say: 'I told you so.' I go deeper than that."

It was true, and she knew it, and she was strangely moved by the quiet impressiveness of his attack.

"Supposing I grant that?" she said.

"I should take it as a signal graciousness. And then——"

"And then——?"

"I should ask you to go on board an English boat that is lying off the town."

"And, of course, I should refuse."

"That seemed to me probable."

"And the next move?"

"I should wait for the moment when a crisis became imminent. I should come here and see you on board."

"I don't think that plan would work."

"It might. I should have the English Consul with me. Then, of course, I should come back here to see the business through."

She proceeded to refill his teacup.

"So the man would stay and the woman run away."

"As civilization is ordered, that is a law of nature."

"Man-made."

"Certainly. But accepted by women. There are some most horribly real situations which a woman should have no share in."

No more passed between them, and each remained resolute and conscious of the other's resolution; but during the next few

days ominous things began to happen. The tribesmen, assembling outside the town, sent a deputation to Ben Bouzid, the Governor, demanding that the country should be cleared of the French. The French Consul, a man of great experience, was away on leave, and the weak Ben Bouzid, after temporizing and consulting one of the oldest of the English merchants, did nothing. Anxiety spread in Casablanca, and the interpreter at the French Consulate sent off a message to Tangier to ask for the dispatch of a warship.

Two days later, the wild tribesmen began to enter the town and to stir up the inhabitants. Craddock had gone to the English Consulate when more sinister news was brought. The Arabs had attacked the train and the workmen at the quarry, and had slain several of the men and mutilated their bodies.

CRADDOCK was unarmed, but he went straight to the house of Alexander Mirlees, and in one of the streets he was spat upon by a tall Arab who was rushing through the town, waving his rifle and calling on the Mohammedans to rise against the infidels. The gate of the Mirlees' house was closed, and when Craddock rang the gate-bell a grille was opened, and through the bars of it he saw the face of the old negro.

"I wish to see Miss Mirlees."

"I have orders, sah, not to open the gate."

"Tell Miss Mirlees that I am here. I must speak with her at once."

She came down to him at the gate, and her handsome and ironical face was framed for him in the square of the grille, with the courtyard garden for a background.

"Has anything happened?"

"The Arabs have attacked the white workmen and killed several of them. The town is seething with fanatics."

"You think it is serious?"

"That is why I am here. The Consuls are preparing to evacuate the Europeans. No one is safe in the streets."

"Are you armed?"

"No. I left my revolver at my hotel."

She stood close to the gate, with the fingers of one hand spread upon the bars of the grille.

"It was good of you to come."

"What matters is your safety."

"I am perfectly safe here. The Arabs

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will respect the house of Alexander Mirlees."

"Nonsense! You will have to pardon my frankness. It is justified."

"I do not agree."

"My dear Miss Mirlees, have you ever seen a fanatical mob? I have. It respects nothing. It is like a mad beast. Nothing is sacred."

"I think you exaggerate."

He laid a hand on the grille, and she was aware of a new fierceness in him.

"Very well. I shall go back to the Consulate, get a party together, and come back here. You will have to go with us. I insist."

"By what right?"

"A man's right—a white man's right. I am not here to spout silly sentiment."

"Thank you. It seems that you and your party would be worse than the Arabs. This house is very strong. I trust my servants; we have arms. In fact, I think that this place is safer. Why not send some of your frightened people here? We could stand a siege."

"I cannot believe that you are serious."

"I am serious, Mr. Craddock. Besides, have all your people forgotten Caid Moulai and his soldiers? Caid Moulai is a friend of my father's. I know him well. He is a great gentleman and a man of honour. Moulai would soon master the mob."

Craddock gave her a passionate look.

"You do not believe in me? It is understandable. And yet—"

The dark eyes behind the grille took on a new expression.

"No, it is not that. Let us make a bargain. If Caid Moulai does not hold Casablanca tamed within the next two days, I will listen to your advice."

FOR the moment, the event appeared destined to prove Meg Mirlees right, for Caid Moulai entered Casablanca with his soldiers on the following day and order was restored. He placed guards over the consulates and patrolled the streets of the town, and when Craddock visited the house of the Mirleeses he found a couple of tall Arabs posted at the gate.

Yet, as Craddock knew, the French colony had not regained its confidence; the panic continued, and people were making use of Moulai's intervention to embrace safety before some worse things might happen.

Meg Mirlees met him smiling. He had been brought to her in the garden.

"What do you think of my two sentries?"

"Strapping fellows. But they don't prove me wrong."

"You were able to come through the streets with nothing but a switch in your hand."

"And a loaded revolver inside my shirt."

"But you did not need it."

"Perhaps that was my luck. My Spanish friend keeps his gate locked and all his shutters closed, and he has a rifle and ammunition laid out nicely on a table."

"Any other indications?"

"They are shipping the whole French colony on board the *Demetria*."

"They appear to have no desire to stay."

He stood leaning against the stone pillar, and she felt his alert calmness, an almost humorous calmness. He seemed to her to be the least fearful of men, proof against the impulses of panic, and so unlike the Craddock of the Rabat surf-boat, that she found it difficult to reconcile her contending impressions. She remembered his frank confession: "Sometimes fear beats me; sometimes I beat fear." But this time she could not doubt but that he would be the victor. She was glad, inwardly exultant. Almost she wished to see him tested.

"What do you really believe?" she asked.

He took a moment to reply, and the conviction in his voice impressed her.

"I still feel that something is going to happen."

"But why?"

"I don't know. That is the feeling I have. It is not that I am being affected by the French panic. This is an interlude."

"But our bargain holds good."

He left her, realizing that it was far more than the mere crudeness of physical happenings that fascinated them, and that the intimate personal reaction of such happenings held the vital secret of life. The eternal spiritual struggle, the play of temperament upon temperament. Why was she drawn to him and him to her? Why had she begun to know that this man had the makings of her inevitable mate? Passion! What a poor thing was passion without the mystery of loving something that was beyond the flesh, something that had the intangible splendour of a quenchless curiosity. This man would always be daring, and attempting some new enterprise, and setting off on it with a boyish seriousness

in his eyes. He would be full of surprises, adventurous appeals. And she felt that if he could win through with one convincing act of courage she would go with him to the ends of the earth.

Craddock strolled back slowly to his hotel. No man looked blackly at him, or spat or threw fanatical curses, and yet he had a sureness in him that the agony of Casablanca was to come. The seeming realities of the moment gave him a flat contradiction. It appeared that old Moulai el Amin held Casablanca in the hollow of his hand. Yet something would happen. A spark would be dropped, a chance stone thrown. The incalculable incident would arrive.

Next day, the fatal spark arrived. From the roof of his hotel Craddock and his Spanish host saw a little French gunboat steam in and anchor off the town.

"What do you make of it?"

The Spaniard stroked his beard.

"That fly has a sting."

"Stings are dangerous, unless they can paralyse. If the French have the sense to let well alone."

"Señor," said the Spaniard, "that is the very last thing men learn to do."

IN a little while it had happened.

That spitfire of a gunboat, full of hot-headed young men, lay rolling at anchor with guns that were ashamed to be silent. Frenchmen had been killed, and here were other Frenchmen lusting to plump their shells into the Arab quarters and to read these savages a lesson. "*Vive la France*, and give them high explosive." The gunboat *Galilee* could sting; she was a wasp, a mosquito; but the human cattle in Casablanca and wild cattle from the hills might be driven to madness by this hornet of the seas.

The civilians and the sailors could not agree. "Stay where you are and keep your guns covered." "But we are Frenchmen, men of spirit," said the sailors, like boys itching to let off patriotic fireworks.

The hotheads had their way. After squabbles and melodramatic interviews the *Galilee* sent a landing-party ashore. They were fired upon at the port gate, perhaps by some of Caid Moulai's men, who, being good Mohammedans doing their job, resented the interference of the infidel. The French broke in, blooded and seeing red. The fighting fool was loose with cartridge

and bayonet. Anything with a face that was not white became an enemy to be shot at.

So it began.

Craddock was one of those who was caught in the streets when this small landing-party of French bluejackets let its panic-rage loose in Casablanca. Hearing the shots and the uproar, he made his way back to his hotel, to find the Spaniard closing the shutters.

"The mad thing has happened, señor."

He was contemptuous, fierce, as he went round slamming the shutters and shooting the bolts to safeguard the residents.

"I saw it from my roof. Two boat-loads of Jack tars! Holy Mother, do they think that they can overawe a town such as this with two dozen or so boys in blue, who begin to let off their popguns directly somebody makes an ugly face at them?"

He drew Craddock to one of the shuttered windows and, opening the shutter, pointed to the deep shadowiness of the narrow street. There was a strange silence, an ominous silence.

"See. It is empty. Over there, if you remember, there was a post of Moulai's men. They have gone. By now that handful of Frenchmen is shut up in the consulate, helpless. And the next act——?"

"What can they do?"

The Spaniard's black eyes were fierce.

"What do men do, señor, when they have made fools of themselves? Proceed to some worse folly, as a rule. If that infernal gunboat begins to bark——"

"We shall have trouble."

"We shall have hell."

"A mob."

"Exactly. With Moulai's men backing their fellows and the tribesmen. Can one blame them? Loot. The Jews. Any white man or woman."

Craddock turned quickly from the window, with the grimness of fear in his eyes; but it was not fear for himself.

"I am going out," he said.

Under his loose linen coat he had a revolver and an ammunition-pouch fastened to his belt.

"I would stay here, señor. There will be two of us."

CRADDOCK had not gone fifty yards along the street when the first shell from the *Galilee* came whining into Casablanca. It

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struck the old Moorish fort, and as the roar of the detonation died away Craddock heard a strange sound spring up, as though a sudden wind was sweeping through the narrow streets and dark, winding passages of the town. It was a human sound, indescribably terrible, made up of wails and shouts and mutterings, the first ululations of an angry mob. It died away, and rose again with the ominous bursting of a second shell.

Craddock ran. He was not ashamed to run, for the fear in him was urgent and fierce and human. His whole consciousness seemed to be projecting itself towards that great white house under the town wall, and yet as he ran he was aware of things happening about him. Faces at narrow windows, frightened faces, sinister faces. Someone cursed him. A great brown pot crashed on the stones behind him.

The luck was with him, for he missed the first cloud-scud of the fanatical storm, and, still running, came to the passage-way that led to the open space in front of Alexander Mirlees's house. The high noon sun poured down into the open space, and at first Craddock thought it was empty. Moulai's two sentries had disappeared. He could not see the gateway, for it was in the side of the house, and recessed under the white and windowless wall.

"Good," he thought; "I'm in time."

He was half-way down the passage when he saw two figures detach themselves from the house. They had emerged from the gateway, two tall Arabs, one in a red burnous, the other in blue. They were looking back towards the gate, and snarling like baffled dogs. One of the Arabs carried a gun; the other had only an old sabre.

The man with the gun raised it, as though to fire at Mirlees's gate; and Craddock, as he ran towards them, saw the fellow's brown face pressed against the butt of the rifle. Craddock's shot rang out half-a-second before the Moor's. He saw the muzzle of the gun jerked in the air, and the red figure fall.

The fellow with the old sabre came leaping in the sunlight. Craddock steadied himself and waited, and then shot him as he would have shot a charging Dervish.

He ran to the gate. It was closed, and so was the grille; but he had a feeling that there was someone standing behind the gate. He shouted.

The grille was opened, and he saw her dark eyes, grave and profound.

"You!"

"Yes, I had to shoot those fellows. Those damned fools of French!"

She swung back the gate.

"Quick!"

He was in and helping her to shoot the clumsy bolts. He noticed that she carried a pistol.

"The mob is loose. More of them coming up the passage."

He shot the grille, and laying an uncere-
monious hand upon her arm, pushed her out of the gateway.

"Sorry, but that gate is not bullet-proof. I'll do the talking. How many men have you here?"

She answered him, smiling into his eyes as though he had something to forgive.

"Not one."

He seemed to bristle.

"Skedaddled! I thought so."

"I found it out less than ten minutes ago. I came and found the gate open. The women, too."

"The house of an infidel is unhealthy when this sort of business starts. Hallo, they are there. Keep back."

He pressed her back behind the angle of the wall, but he himself remained in the gateway. He heard blows upon the gate, shouts, and very coolly he walked to the gate, slipped the grille open with the muzzle of his revolver, keeping well clear of it and close to the strong timber.

"This house——"

But whatever he had meant to say he was given no chance of saying it. There were yells. A man tried to thrust a rifle through the grille. Craddock shot him and closed it, and as he did so a bullet came through the door and ripped his coat at the shoulder.

He stepped back, with his face to the gate.

"A near shave, that! Have you got a rifle anywhere?"

"Yes."

"Get it. Stop. I suppose there is no other way in?"

"No. The windows towards the street are too narrow—and too high up."

"Good. Get that rifle. I can make that gate a bit unhealthy."

It was a very massive gate, but the bulk of it seemed to be vibrating like the skin of a drum.

Craddock took the rifle from her and knelt on one knee on the stones. He guessed that the Arabs were trying to beat in the

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grille cover with an axe or hammer.

"Keep back!"

He fired, and a scream raised a shrill note in the chorus. He fired again, and after a babble and a muttering of rage and of dismay, a gradual silence fell. Craddock and Meg Mirlees looked at each other, and the love went deep into the heart of each.

"They have left the gate."

She was leaning against the wall, rather pale, but perfectly calm.

"I suppose we had better make up our minds to see it out here. The streets will be impossible."

Craddock reloaded the rifle.

"Quite impossible. By the way, how much ammunition have you?"

"Only ten rounds for that rifle."

"That's rather unfortunate," he said.

"I SUPPOSE they will come back?"

Craddock had made a little pile of his revolver cartridges, and was counting them as though they were pieces of gold.

"I think we must count on that. There are various possibilities. If a French squadron arrives in time to clear up the mess before it has got too nasty—it may be a question of holding out until we are rescued. Which is the strongest part of the house?"

"My room. Come and see. We can leave the gate for a moment."

A stairway led from the courtyard into a latticed gallery, and from this gallery a narrow passage some twenty feet in length gave access to Meg Mirlees's suite of rooms. The passage was very dark, and anyone entering it from the sunlit court would see but little until his eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness. Craddock stood and considered for a moment.

"Yes, barricade the far end of it. One can shoot down this passage. Which way do your windows face?"

"On to the garden."

"Are they overlooked?"

"From the town wall."

"Then we shall have to do without lights. The thing will be to sit tight and say nothing. Now, what about food and water?"

"I'll see to that."

"Will you? Excellent. I will go and squat by the gate until you have got in the supplies, and then we will see about barricading the passage."

She gave him a look and a significant smile.

"You were right."

"I'm sorry," he said. "One can't help being right—sometimes."

They made their preparations, closing the shutters and barricading the passage with heavy furniture and mattresses; nor was there any further attack made that day upon the house of Alexander Mirlees. The French bombardment had ceased during the afternoon. Casablanca seemed to have grown more quiet, and when Meg Mirlees made tea and they sat on her divan in the dim light of the shuttered room, they pretended to make a joke of the whole business. Yet there were little intimate touches, moments when they looked at each other with profound understanding. The great thing was happening to both of them, and they discovered a kind of deep delight in eluding the reality, and in pretending to play at life while death and love were waiting to grapple each other.

About sunset Craddock grew restless.

"I think I'll go up on the roof and try and make out what is happening."

"I'll show you the way."

"You may do that, but I don't want you on the roof."

"But it is share and share alike."

"Not quite that. I have a man's prejudices."

She showed him the stair leading to the roof, and he crawled out on the flat surface, and above the parapet he saw the redness of the sunset. But there was another redness above Casablanca, the glare of burning houses, and from the innumerable dark crevices rose a vague clamour, sinister and strange. Occasional shots rang out.

Craddock was filled with a sense of foreboding. He could see the *Galilee* lying black out yonder against the sunset, a solitary and mischievous sea-sprite, unable to control the horrors that it had created. When would the French ships arrive?

He crawled back to the stair-head, telling himself that when darkness fell the real terror would begin; yet when he rejoined Meg in the room below he appeared casual and calm.

"Nothing much to be seen. A few houses burning."

His very calmness made her understand how great the danger was. And she loved this calmness of his, this most convincing mood of courage. Was this the man who had clung to the thwart in the Rabat surf-

(Continued on page 140.)

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boat? He had told her the truth about himself; she felt it, embraced it.

Night came. They sat and talked, and sometimes they listened, yet nothing happened, and the silence made the suspense seem heavier. Every now and again Craddock scrambled over the barricade, and went down into the courtyard to assure himself that the gate had not been forced. He had begun to wonder whether they would be attacked. Yet there were those dead men lying outside the gate, and blood called for blood.

About midnight a sudden restlessness came upon him. They were sitting in the dark room, smoking cigarettes and talking in low voices, when Craddock thought that he heard a sound somewhere in the empty house. He climbed the barricade, and had reached the stairs leading to the courtyard when he was aware of a movement in the open space below.

For a moment he was undecided as to what to do, and as to how this lurker had made his way into the place. He realized that it might be one of the servants, who had been in hiding and had emerged from his hiding-place. But he remained silent. He began to descend the stairway. He was half-way down it when he heard the sound of the gate being opened, and the padding of naked feet.

He retreated quickly to the top of the stairway and remained quite still, but in the dim light he saw the courtyard fill with white-robed figures, moving with a kind of hungry stealth. The silence of them was ominous. These men had a purpose; they were not mere looters, mad and yelling, a rabble drunk with its own noise.

He slipped back into the passage and over the barricade.

"Will you load for me?"

"Then—they are here?"

"Yes. Someone was in the house and opened the gate."

"But I hear nothing."

He touched her hand for a moment, and stretched himself on one of the mattresses behind the barricade.

"Lie down. You can pass the pistols to me."

She knew now that this silence was full of vague terror.

DAWN came.

It was the dawn of the second day.

She lay asleep beside him on the mattress

behind the barricade, and he—looking at her with eyes that ached—saw the soft whiteness of her sleeping profile and the black tangle of her hair.

He had four cartridges left, and one of those was sacred. For more than thirty hours he had held that barricade, without sleep, eating where he lay, and she had helped him. Had ever a man had a finer comrade, a more splendid mate? Just four cartridges! And those sullen fanatics, lurking there, raging relentlessly over their dead, ready to crawl over the sprawling bodies. It had become a trial of endurance, of stolid and ferocious cunning. One more attack would see the end.

He looked at the woman.

She slept.

Should he do it while she slept, save her the horror and the heroism of that last decision?

Was there any hope, the merest glimmer of hope?

There might be. He could not shoot her while there was.

She woke. Her hand touched his arm, as though to be reassured. She sat up.

"Daylight!"

"Yes."

"Are they still there?"

He nodded.

"You remember?"

"Just four cartridges. Yes, I remember."

She stood up.

"Dear—let us go in the daylight. I am not afraid."

He watched her. She went to the windows and opened the shutters, and the morning light flooded the room. It showed him to her as a man with a harsh white face, with a bullet-mark across one cheek, and his left shoulder and sleeve all blood. He looked fierce, emaciated, but behind his fierceness shone the spirit of the great lover.

She threw herself on the mattress beside him.

"Oh, my man!"

He caught her and held her.

"Have you the courage to do it?"

"I have."

They kissed. And then he scrambled up on his knees, tense, listening. He had heard some sound. He turned sideways, and his eyes held hers. They listened.

There were men moving in the courtyard. They heard a voice hailing the horror of the silent house, a French voice.

"Is there anyone alive here?"

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LONG COMPLETE NOVEL

by WARWICK DEEPING

Dore
(15)

THE boat was Dutch, and they boarded her at Southampton on a windy day in June.

All three of them were English, and complete strangers to each other; but the fact that they were the only English people sailing on the *Marsubia* was to prove a link in the chain of their three lives.

The girl was the first to appear on deck, and her presence there was so noticeable that a deck-steward hastened to find her a chair.

"Thanks."

She had changed into white, and it suited her, for she was a dark woman, wiry without being too thin, with the smell of the heather and the woods in the bloom of her. Her skin had an olive tint, and the colour of her neck was a soft, bronzed yellow. Her quick glances were everywhere. Her hair showed a soft, black crispness, and when she smiled—which was not often—the long line of her red mouth curved upwards into either cheek.

She sat there, observing things and people, a self-reliant young woman, a little too sure of herself and too critical of others, and very quick in the registering of her impressions. She had no fear of anything. She had lived much with dogs and horses and men, and in a country where a woman might choose to go armed.

The second Briton appeared upon the deck and came within her purview. A large man, he leant against the white rails with that English air of being on the top of all material things. He wore white trousers, a blue serge coat, and a Panama hat with the front part of the brim turned down. His moustache was big and reddish and firm, curling away from a broad nose and a pair of cheeks that looked stuffed out with self-confidence and vitality. His brown eyes had a tawny tinge, and were full of self-congratulatory twinkles. He smoked a cigar, and it made his lips look rather fatter and coarser than they were.

This man had eyes in the back of his head. If there was a woman about—an attractive woman—he managed to be quickly aware of her. He was full of animal magnetism, and he felt it in others. The telepathic deck-

steward, who spent his life in watching people and in forestalling their wants, with a view to gracious gratuities, summed up the situation. Two English, an impressive-looking man and an attractive girl, two chairs, a polite intimation that one of the chairs was vacant but available. The two men smiled at each other and the large man sat down.

"I hope you don't object?"

He raised his hat.

"My cigar, you know."

"If it is a good one."

He smiled, a large smile.

"It cost a shilling! My name's Burrell. You'll excuse my breeziness—but the sea. Yes, one loses a little of—what shall we call it?"

"Caution?"

"Oh, perhaps. Well, here we are. Looks like being a wee bit rough. I love it rough."

She was studying him with the air of a woman who thinks that she knows most things about men and horses and dogs.

"Obviously—you lose nothing else. My name is Mirlees. I am going to Casablanca. Now you know."

"Excellent. I'm Morocco bound, too."

"Pleasure or business?"

"Perhaps a bit of both. Business is pleasure. The Sultan, you know."

"I do know. People make money out of him. He has a passion for gramophones and clockwork toys."

"My dear Miss Mirlees!"

"You are not in the clockwork toy department. You are what we call—excuse me—a concession-monger?"

"Let us call it a financier, a traveller, a collector."

"We are great collectors, we English. Yes, and here is another of us."

The third Briton had arrived. He was a smallish man, brown, clean-shaven, rather thin about the mouth and chin, and with a restless pair of grey eyes. He wore a brown ulster and a cap, the peak of which balanced his sharp chin like the upper peak of the new moon. He looked ill, or on the point of being ill, for his face had a grey harshness, and his cheeks were hollowed. Moreover, he did

not fit the ship. He was the most obvious of landmen, shy of the sea, strange to it, vaguely discomfited, unsure, unhappy.

Mr. Burrell beamed. He enjoyed the superiority of the man with a steady stomach.

"A lost dog—what?"

"He looks ill."

"He is going to—be—ill. Poor devil! Now, what should you say he is?"

"I am not very curious."

"Try."

"Some people are so vague."

"Not Service."

"No, I don't think so."

"Trade. A Phœnician."

"Probably."

There was a vacant space on the right-hand side of Miss Mirlees's chair, and this most unseaworthy person made a sign to the deck-steward that he wished to occupy that space. The steward humoured him, for some of his fattest tips came from the pockets of people who loathed the sea. The man in the ulster sat down on Miss Mirlees's right, threw one fiercely disgusted and pathetic glance at Mr. Burrell's cigar, and relapsed into a protective silence.

Burrell leant forward and spoke to him. His genial egotism could not resist a victim and the double stimulus of sympathising with a victim.

"A bit breezy, sir."

"It is."

"The thing is to keep warm and out in the air. I used to know a man——"

He of the ulster gave him a savage look.

"Thanks. I'm a bad sailor. Need we discuss it?"

Mr. Burrell's smile included the girl.

"So was Nelson, my dear sir. If one feels a bit squeamish——"

The other groped in his ulster pocket, produced a book and proceeded to study it. His compressed lips were pale, his face a muddy grey, and his withdrawal behind his book was the closing of a door. Miss Mirlees, glancing casually at the book, recognised it as an Arabic dictionary. The discovery surprised her; but then the desire to acquire a knowledge of Arabic might be natural in a bagman as well as in a gentleman in the service of His Majesty King George.

The bell rang for lunch. Mr. Burrell was up and ready, undiscouraged by his repulse. His healthy appetite swaggered. He felt strong and adventurous.

"That's a good sound. I believe we are at the captain's table, Miss Mirlees."

His glance challenged the unseaworthy person to rise and be a man.

"Better to eat, sir."

The grey eyes gave him one fierce look.

"Damn you," they said; "damn the insolence of your big paunch. Go and feed."

They went, and the man in the ulster watched them go, and especially he watched

the girl. "Mirlees." Could she be the daughter of Mirlees of Morocco, that great Frank whom the Moors delighted to honour? He had a letter of introduction to Alexander Mirlees.

He waited awhile and then rose and followed them, throwing a look of hatred and loathing at the grey-green heave of the sea. There was more than hatred in his eyes. There was fear in them, an instinctive and inevitable fear. He paused for a moment, and holding to the rail, glared down at the sea.

"Damn you."

It was the defiance of a man who was afraid.

Mr. Craddock, for that was his name, found himself placed at the captain's table, and on Miss Mirlees's left, Burrell being on her right. They were surprised to see Craddock arrive with his tallow-coloured face and his air of striving to suppress an insurgent ghastliness. A discouraging table companion! Burrell gave the girl a sympathetic look, and hinted in an undertone that he might be able to arrange a reshuffling of the seats at the table. He was on very friendly terms with the captain. Great fellow, Captain Vandervorde. And he, Mr. Burrell, held a position in the world that made the captains of ships conceive it worth their while to be polite to him.

Miss Mirlees was discouraging. It is possible that she resented the assertive masculinity of the large man and his benignly protective air, for she was a woman who felt sure that she did not need protecting. The maleness of Burrell condescended. He called it chivalry.

Craddock was looking dubiously at his plate. Then, with a quick side glance at his neighbours' plates, he began to eat as though he was making a deliberate conquest of the base flesh.

Miss Mirlees passed him the salt.

"Thank you."

He smiled slightly, and she felt sorry for him. He might be a very unseaworthy person, but he was less boring than Mr. Burrell.

"These Dutch lines are very well run."

He agreed; but she understood that his attention was not wholly hers, and that under certain circumstances the carrying on of a conversation might entail anguish. Though very self-assured, she was a woman, and her sense of humour was more delicate and sympathetic than Mr. Burrell's knock-about jocosity.

He was talking to the captain, and still advertising his own amazing seaworthiness and glorying in it.

"We may find things a bit dirty in the Bay, sir?"

Captain Vandervorde, a smooth, hairless, quiet man, who spoke very good English, gave it as his opinion that the Bay might prove contentious.

"Well, it can't be too rough for me, sir. The rougher it gets the better I like it. We sons of sea-dogs, you know!"

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He laughed and poured more oil on his salad.

"I think Miss Mirlees here is a stout seafaring lady. Won't turn a hair."

She eyed his salad disdainfully.

"I'm pretty tough, Mr. Burrell. You need not worry."

"I won't."

II

THERE was less wind next day, and the *Mar-subia* steamed steadily towards the green Atlantic, a summer ship on a summer sea, the white boats on her davits flashing like white gulls. People grew more friendly, getting together into little groups and debating about deck games and card tables and a possible dance. Yet the three English people held apart. Miss Mirlees did not want to bother, for what was the use of troubling about people whom you would never see again at the end of a week? Tangier was not India or Singapore.

"Life's too short," she said to Burrell, who came to try and persuade her to play deck quoits. "I prefer to be lazy."

Mr. Craddock was in the next chair, diligently dipping into that Arabic dictionary, and still wearing his brown ulster. He and Meg Mirlees had not exchanged ten words; but Burrell did not know this, and being piqued by their propinquity, he deserted the crowd for the woman. He brought a novel and a cigar and an air of superabundant friendliness, and sat down beside her and talked.

He talked for effect, which was natural, seeing that he had an attractive girl beside him, and beyond her a sulky and reticent individual who kept his nose between the pages of his book. The unseaworthy person was a foil, and Burrell was ready to show him how much better able he was to please a woman.

He talked about his travels. Yes, he had been a great traveller, a thoroughly boring traveller, and Miss Mirlees was beginning to wish him at Jericho, when Mr. Craddock's quiet voice broke in.

"I don't think you are quite right about the ice on Lake Baikal."

"I beg your pardon!"

"The ice on Lake Baikal. And then—in Manchuria—you know."

"What about it?"

"I have been there. The Manchurian winters—"

Mr. Burrell leant forward in his chair.

"Do you mean to suggest that I haven't been there?"

"Not at all. I expect you passed through. I lived there for nearly a year."

There was a chilliness between them from that moment, and between the ice of two men who disliked each other Miss Mirlees lay poised in her deck chair, a woman with the sunlight in her skin. She was amused. Mr. Burrell's adventurous reminiscences had been

pulled up in the middle of the road, and he did not restart them, for he possessed a sort of elephantine cunning, and the little man in the ulster had a deflected but attentive air. One of those nasty little fellows who wait around to catch you tripping. "All right, young fellow-my-lad!" So Mr. Burrell began to make love to the girl, for that was beyond Mr. Craddock's right of contradiction. It was a fact, and Mr. Burrell advertised it with genial truculence.

Mr. Craddock read his dictionary. Dull dog! Even when a certain restlessness became evident in the chair next to him he remained grim and absorbed and did not intervene. The challenge was obvious, but then Craddock hated the obvious. He had a temperament. Obviously the reasonable thing to do was to introduce himself to Mirlees's daughter, yet he did nothing of the kind. Moreover, he had reasons—reasons that would have caused the Burrell man to shout with laughter and to apply to an Arab horse the mentality of a bullock.

"Well, what about a game of quoits?"

She was bored with his persistence, and Burrell was blind to the fact that he was a bore, and, of course, that was why he was boring.

"If you can get any of these people to play."

"Oh, plenty. I had a party."

She sat up. Mr. Burrell would be even more breezy and genial in a crowd; but then she would share him with the crowd.

"All right."

"Splendid."

He took her acquiescence as a personal triumph, and as they left their chairs he glanced at the man in the ulster. "How's that, Mr. Manchuria?" And Mr. Craddock was observed for a moment by another pair of eyes, glancing swiftly down and back at him over a shoulder. He appeared absorbed, unaware of their departure.

"You dull thing!" she thought, but the very thinking of it hinted at vague curiosity, for aloofness is always provocative.

Craddock watched her walk away, and he was man enough to appreciate her carriage and the splendid way she moved. He sensed pride and self-confidence in every line of her, and his sudden realisation of the woman in Meg Mirlees became a swiftly personal affair. Perhaps it was Burrell rolling largely beside her, but a pale ardour—the hunter's look—flashed into Craddock's eyes. "Hang it, why did I not meet her on shore, not on this beast of a ship?"

He laid the Arabic dictionary on the deck and sat up with his elbows on his knees and his fists under his chin. For the moment he looked quite a different man—resolute, resourceful, aggressive. He stood up, walked over to the rail and stared at the sea.

Such an amiable sea, so sinuous and kind

that he wondered at his elemental fear of it. Yes, it was a beastly thing, fear, especially when it could be uncontrollable and obvious to other people. He had no wish for that girl to see him in one of his blue funks. A nice introduction, that, to Alexander Mirlees!

He smiled. Queer creatures, men! For Craddock knew himself to be a man who was a physical coward under certain conditions, and also the slave of a passionate moral courage. He rode his body like an ass, thumping it with his heels, driving it forward, compelling it to face the things from which it shrank. He had the soul of a Drake in the body of a poltroon.

"I think I'll leave it," he reflected, "leave it till I get ashore. With a little luck I may make a decent showing. Anyway, she can think I am seasick. Not heroic, but natural."

III

THE Bay of Biscay proved boisterous, yet with a good-tempered, summer vigour that lacked the viciousness of winter. Its blue-green rollers gave the *Marsubia* an oily, staggering motion, and bunks were full and tables empty. Mr. Burrell promenaded, smoking many cigars and showing off his sea-legs and his bold Norse ancestry for the benefit of Miss Mirlees, who was quailless and serene. Mr. Craddock had disappeared, and at each meal Mr. Burrell would give his neighbour a sly look and exult in Mr. Craddock's unseaworthiness.

He would hum the old song, "In the Bay of Biscay—o," and he would repeat the "o," lengthening it into a moan of anguish. "That's the note. Poor fellow! I imagine he wishes himself back with the Chinks." His humour grew so coarsely physical that Miss Mirlees disliked him with an acuteness that became snubbing. The rough weather appeared to stimulate the boastful stomach of the man, and she tried to chasten it by seriously stating that people with brains were bad sailors. If you had no brains the movement of the sea did not matter.

He looked at her benignantly.

"Then we must be the exceptions."

"I thought you would say that. Dull people are always exceptional, I suppose."

"A little peevish to-day. I hope you are not feeling—"

"I'm bored."

One had to use a hammer on the head of such an ox.

But the shell of him was not so thick as to be utterly impervious to criticism. Miss Mirlees was bored. His infinite good temper shrugged off the personal accusation, and set him exploring new sources of amusement. He preferred women who were "difficult," women with uncertain tempers. "More interesting, my dear chap, provided you don't mean to marry 'em." A man ought to keep his sea-legs when a woman's moods grow rough.

Mr. Burrell was a conscious humorist, and by some coincidence he did discover on the *Marsubia* a jest that was worth developing. It happened that he found a certain person in an obscure corner of one of the decks when that person was supposed to be in his bunk, petitioning the gods with groans. Mr. Burrell played the cat-and-mouse game. He grew interested, puzzled. He wanted to be sure of his facts before he announced them and challenged deductions. His observations lasted over one whole day.

He sprang the jest on Miss Mirlees after breakfast, with green rollers sweeping by, and the wind making a cheerful snoring through the ship's gear.

"I say, I have found out a funny thing."

She turned the pages of a book, and her "Oh, have you?" sounded apathetic.

"Remember that fellow in the ulster?"

"Well, it is not very long since—"

"No. But he wasn't at breakfast, was he?"

"I did not observe him."

"He has missed the last six meals. That's correct?"

"Apparently."

Mr. Burrell began to chortle and to rock in his chair.

"Presumably sick—groaning in his bunk, whimpering, 'Steward—steward!' That's what we thought."

She caught him up. This man seemed to be a creature of one idea, and at sea his idea of humour circulated around the insecurity of other people's meals. But he could rouse other feelings of nausea.

"You—thought. It seems to be an obsession. Why not leave the man's unseaworthiness alone?"

He seized the dramatic moment.

"But that's the point. He's not sick."

"Well, where is the catch?"

"It's a bit of a conundrum. But I'll tell you what I think. He's frightened."

He had scored, but she would not let him enjoy the glory of it. Besides, another man's fear was not a thing to be chuckled over. Either it was pathetic or it was nasty.

"Oh, what makes you think that?"

"He was on deck all yesterday, squatting on a coil of rope behind one of the boats."

"Why shouldn't he?"

"But that's the point. If you are not sick—you don't hide. Where's the motive? Besides, I've seen his face. I should call it the face of a chap who was in a blue funk."

She frowned slightly.

"Why?"

"Well—why? That's the point. Let's take it that he is afraid of the sea, that he can't go below, but must squat by one of the boats, so as to be ready."

"That's absurd."

"He is there now. If you don't believe it, go and look."

She was interested, and it was no mean

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curiosity that made her take up Burrell's challenge; moreover, she would discover pleasure in proving him wrong. So, having inquired as to the whereabouts of Mr. Craddock's coil of rope, she set out to observe him. He was wedged between two in-swung boats, squatting on the coiled rope, with that eternal Arabic dictionary on his knees. He was wearing his ulster, with the collar of it turned up, and yet he looked cold, like a man who had prickles of chilliness down his back; and for a full quarter of a minute she was able to observe him—before his pinched face was suddenly lifted.

"Of course," she thought, "he has had malaria. That's it."

Yet, a moment later, she was doubting the correctness of her explanation. A man did not shiver with his eyes.

"Good morning."

It was he who spoke, and his jaw seemed to move stiffly. She had the feeling that he was trying to control something. Was it fear, and if so—fear of what?

"You have found a snug place there. We thought—"

"Sea-sick! One prefers to be alone."

"Naturally."

She turned as though to leave him in peace, and then hesitated and stood regarding him.

"Are you sure you are not ill? Really ill—I mean?"

She fancied that his grey face flushed slightly.

"No. I am quite all right, thank you."

She walked away, puzzled, but not wishing to give Mr. Burrell any cause for elation, she asserted that it was obvious that Mr. Craddock was suffering from chronic malaria. "It recurs, you know, especially in cold weather. Besides, he appears to have travelled a good deal."

Burrell was coarsely sceptical.

"I think I know when a man's in a blue funk."

"But what has he to fear? The idea's absurd."

"Let's leave it at that," said he; "but I may have a chance of proving that I am right."

She snubbed him.

"I thought the last word was sacred to women."

"I'm not an old woman—anyway," he retorted with his genial laugh.

IV

MISS MIRLEES was interested, though she was quite unable to explain her interest, unless she considered it to be inspired by a desire to prove Mr. Burrell wrong. She had been caught between these two male entities, and being a young woman of some sensitiveness, she reacted, in spite of her apparent hardness. She disliked Burrell; he repelled her, and the repulsion pushed her towards a queer interest in the other man. He was human,

human in a dog-like way, while the Burrell man was a mere ox.

The *Marsubia* had turned her stern to the sunset, and was steaming towards the straits when Miss Mirlees found herself in the neighbourhood of Craddock's lurking place between the two boats. The sky was all yellow and red above the green heave of the sea, and between the white bellies of the two boats she saw the slight figure of the man wrapped in its bronze-coloured ulster. She had a feeling that he had been there ever since the morning, and that he had had no food. His face had an ascetic and bloodless pallor; it was like an ivory mask against the extravagant colour of the sky.

Their eyes met. She thought that she detected defiance in his, while he discovered a tremor of pity in hers. The idea of her pity annoyed him.

"Rather a fine sky."

She rested her hands on the gunwale of one of the boats.

"These sea sunsets are splendid. Give me the desert and the sea for sunsets."

He nodded, but his eyes were on the defensive.

"Or an ice floe."

"I have never seen an ice floe. Have you?"

"Once or twice."

She knew that he was speaking the truth. Somehow she felt that she would believe what he said, while she would always suspect Burrell of lying. Why was it? Craddock was a most unconvincing figure, and yet he convinced. He gave her a sense of something finely and tensely strong. He was not obvious. She liked his eyes, trusted them. They made her think of the eyes of a very intelligent dog.

She was gazing in the direction of the African coast.

"You must have travelled a good deal."

"I have."

"You like it?"

"Hate it."

Her eyes fell suddenly to his.

"Then it's a matter of necessity?"

"In a sense, yes."

So he was in business of some kind. She was disappointed. A moment later she caught him with a queer smile lurking about his mouth.

"We ought to be ashore to-morrow."

"Tangier?"

"Are you landing there?"

"Yes."

"Beastly place."

"Why?"

"It is not the place, but the people. Hybrid. Neither white nor brown nor black."

He ventured another question.

"You are going on?"

"Yes, to Casablanca."

"So am I."

She was surprised. What on earth was he going to do at Casablanca? Trade?

"Are you going by boat?"

His eyelids flickered.

"Is there a boat? I thought——"

"A tub from Tangier to Larache and Rabat. Saves time and trouble. You can get a donkey or a horse."

"Perhaps I'll try it. It sounds easier."

"It is."

They came to a sudden end of the parley and she drifted away, and, hearing the dinner bell, went down to the saloon. Mr. Burrell was there, unfolding his napkin; but she sat down as though the large man did not exist.

"The captain says that he will put us off to-morrow morning."

He was glancing past her at Craddock's vacant seat, and she, too, unfolded her serviette.

"I suppose so."

"Our friend must eat that dictionary of his. Rather dry diet."

"Some people prefer it. I think I do."

There was a movement behind them, and Craddock slipped into his seat, spread his table napkin, and picked up a menu card. Burrell's face grew sly and whimsical. He nudged Miss Mirlees.

"What did I say?"

She ignored him, and turning slightly towards Craddock, made it as plain as a woman could that she wished him to talk to her. Her motive was a double one. She desired to snub Mr. Burrell and to find out what Craddock's business was at Casablanca.

She did not find out. He was politely elusive, and he appeared to be hungry, and, realising his hunger, she had pity on him and suffered the conversation to go on disjointedly; but she cold-shouldered Mr. Burrell. One fact she did bring to light, that this was Craddock's first visit to Morocco, though he knew Algeria and Egypt. Burrell, who was listening, boomed in upon them.

"I met a man who wanted to sell the Moors patent medicines. A bit of an ass, you can imagine. I believe he sent a box of pills to Abdul. Nothing doing—I should take it—outside guns."

Craddock replied to him with great casualness, his eyes fixed upon his plate.

"That's quite likely. But I think the French would prefer soap."

"What have the French to do with it?"

"A good deal. Or they will have."

"Is soap your line?"

Mr. Burrell's jocularly could be very offensive, but it did not appear to disturb Craddock.

"No, as a matter of fact, it isn't. Though one might do worse. What's yours?"

Mr. Burrell winked.

"Oh, I only do big business."

"I see. You might be interested in the Moorish ass. Export them to England, you know, for use at seaside places in August."

Burrell burst into one of his huge laughs.

"Splendid idea! And a few donkey-boys, too. Cause quite a sensation at Brighton."

Miss Mirlees let a moment of silence pass, and then, as though Mr. Burrell's eruption had been nothing but a very boring interlude, she resumed her conversation with Mr. Craddock.

"Do you know anything about Egyptology?"

"Yes, a little."

"Let us try that."

Their eyes met with a glimmer of mutual understanding.

V

THE sea was an intense blue and reasonably calm when the *Marsubia* landed them and their baggage at Tangier. The flickering blue water in the harbour was like watered silk spread below the white and yellow houses. It played in a more brilliant blue about the boats and lighters; and on the quays merchandise lay piled, with little figures in red and blue and white moving hither and thither. Mr. Burrell stood up in the barge, smoking his cigar, and let his red and genial face shine upon Africa. Craddock was sitting on his trunk. His name was painted on the lid in black letters, but since he was sitting on the middle of it, Miss Mirlees's curiosity was balked for the time being. His name began with a C and ended with a K. That was all that she could read.

Mr. Burrell waxed conversational.

"Now, for the mob, what! Half the spongers and rogues in Tangier. Say, Miss Mirlees, do you happen to know of a hotel where one is not bitten?"

"I do not," said she.

The crowd awaited them, an absurdly eager crowd of Arabs, Jews and blacks, yelling, gesticulating, offering to handle baggage, to act as guides, to carry through any swindle that such a town can render possible. They resembled a pack of cringing, yelping, grinning dogs. They fell upon Mr. Burrell, because he looked the largest and the richest and the most squeezable of the landing party, a fine peach or a magnificent pomegranate bursting with pips. They clutched him; they jabbered; they began to quarrel over him and his belongings.

A hook-nosed little Scotchman and a couple of negro servants, using inconsiderate feet and elbows, had pushed through the rabble to meet Miss Mirlees.

"Glad to see you, Macpherson. How is my father?"

"Very well, miss. He sent me to meet you, because he has had to go south on business. I have rooms booked at Miguel's Hotel."

"Good."

She looked round for Craddock. He had engaged a couple of porters, and was shrugging off the rest of the importunate fools with

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smiling contempt. He appeared to have grown taller.

"Mr. Craddock."

He turned sharply. So she had got his name!

"Miguel's is the best place. Perhaps you know."

He raised his hat.

"Thank you. I will try Miguel's."

Mr. Burrell was still involved in a sort of dog fight, and as Meg Mirlees followed the two negroes who cleared a path for her she had a glimpse of Mr. Burrell's face, very red and indignant under the brim of his Panama hat

"Miguel's is
the best place.
Perhaps you
know"

He was shouting in English, but without the least effect. He had lost his temper. He was damning right and left, and trying to rescue a dispatch-box that had involved two Arabs in a scuffle. A little hairy Jew was hanging on to his coat-tails and squeaking at him in bastard English.

"I ver' good guide, boss; I—b—y good guide. I know all English officers from Gib., every damn one—English officer. My name Aaron; b—y good guide."

Meg Mirlees caught Craddock's eyes. She went through the crowd, laughing, with Mr. Macpherson at her heels, a man coldly truculent and full of incisive authority. Craddock and his porters followed. He had discarded his ulster, and he walked with his head up, eyes alert and smiling, his feet on the solid earth.

"She has got my name," he thought. "Shall I tell her who I am? Or shall I wait till

I meet the great Alexander? By Jove, but she is splendid."

She went ahead of him through the multi-coloured crowd, and the warm and adventurous fancy of him likened her to a white plume waving a man forward in the storm of a cavalry charge



Miguel's was kept by a Spaniard, and it was located in a big Moorish house that had been adapted to serve European needs. Miguel himself met them in the courtyard, a very tall and dignified Spaniard with a high, melancholy forehead, a Don Quixote turned hotelier. He bowed. The daughter of the great Alexander Mirlees was a serene and sacred lady.

He bowed less deeply to Craddock.

"The señora would eat?"

"At once, Señor Miguel."

"Alone?"

But Miguel had a quick, black eye, and he understood that neither Mr. Craddock nor Miss Mirlees would be offended if they found themselves at the same table. It was done. Their table was set at one of the arcaded windows of the gallery surrounding the courtyard, and Craddock had ordered a bottle of Spanish wine.

Her eyes had an expectant look. Or, rather, there was the suggestion of a serene and self-confident command in them. "Your name is Craddock," they said, "and you are travelling to Casablanca. I, Miss Meg Mirlees, have permitted you to sit down at the same table with me. Now, my friend, I expect you to explain yourself." He sensed this at the back of her eyes. He was burning to put himself on more intimate and impressive terms with her. He did not wish her to consider him to be a sort of cosmopolitan bagman. On the *Marsubia* he had cut a very poor figure, a despicable figure.

He hesitated. He was remembering that he still had to negotiate that damned sea passage to Rabat in some greasy, floundering "coaster." He dreaded it. He would have preferred mules and horses; but, then, she had proposed the "coaster."

"I'll wait," he said to himself, and raised the bottle to offer her wine.

"May I give you some?"

She looked him full in the eyes.

"Thank you—I think—not."

Her meaning was very clear to him. She did not accept wine from comparative strangers—unless— He replaced the bottle on the table.

"We seem to have lost our travelling companion."

The poise of her head was impartial.

"Perhaps. You understand how to travel."

"A little."

"It requires some experience."

"It does."

Her dark eyes swept his, challenged them, and returned to gaze upon the courtyard. His resolution wavered, and then held firm.

"The thing is—never to get flustered."

"Or to give yourself away."

He was trying to think of some graciously defensive retort when Mr. Burrell arrived in the courtyard of the hotel. He came with noise and confusion, like a very big and angry man jabbing at a cloud of flies on a boiling

day. Half the harbour loafers of Tangier seemed to have come with him. At least a dozen of them were carrying his trunk, and every article of baggage he possessed was a source of contention and a cause of strife. The Jew still pawed at him, advertising himself as the one and only guide for the "God-damn English."

Mr. Burrell plunged his way out of the crowd, and left them to be dealt with by Miguel.

"Here, pay the blackguards. The place is a den of thieves. I'll settle in the bill."

He caught sight of Miss Mirlees and Craddock up above, and came steaming up to them.

"Well, I've got here, and kept my temper—somehow."

"Won't you join us?"

"Charmed—I'm sure."

And for the rest of the meal Craddock was able to meditate upon Miss Mirlees's cool graciousness to Mr. Burrell.

VI

NEXT day they boarded the *Santissima Isabella*, a most unsanctified tub of a boat, with her upper works painted a bilious yellow, and her hull and her paddle wheels green. She was dirty. The smell from her engines wrestled with the smell from the cook's galley, and her saloon—such as it was—suggested stale bread and garlic. Miss Mirlees was given the only respectable cabin, and Craddock, finding himself cooped up to sleep with Mr. Burrell and two French commercial travellers, decided to spread a rug on deck.

He approached the capable Macpherson.

"How long will this trip last? About a day?"

Macpherson tickled one eyebrow.

"That will depend on the Atlantic Ocean and this tub's engine."

"But the weather looks set fair."

"The Atlantic will give us a swell, sir, wind or no wind. I've known this trip last seven days."

Craddock felt depressed. Miss Mirlees had treated him with some coolness, and his self-respect, and much more than his self-respect, had become involved in her attitude towards him. He had begun to care, and to care with an acuteness that astonished him. Like life, she challenged his courage, and Craddock was a passionate lover of life.

Her cool impartiality drove him towards the realisation of her as a woman who could be utterly unimpartial. That ivory shell of her! Yes, he knew her intuitively, the real Meg Mirlees, the woman whose love would be a fierce and resolute tenderness. What a mate she would make, a proud mate for a proud man.

Meanwhile, he saw her sitting under a meagre canvas awning, suffering the large egotisms of Mr. Burrell, and suffering them

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with apparent resignation. Mr. Burrell had appropriated her. He was in great form. He was consciously excluding Craddock, and gloating over it; and Craddock, being recklessly sensitive, accepted the exclusion. He had moods of fierce haughtiness.

"Compete with that fellow! No, I'm damned if I will."

Therefore he held aloof, and talked to Mr. Macpherson and to the little hairy Spaniard who captained the *Santissima Isabella*. The pinched look returned to his face, and when the yellow and green tub put to sea he found an isolated corner on deck and withdrew himself.

Now, all the awkwardness that was inherent in the temperament and the mental make-up of him came in very handy to Mr. Burrell. The big man was still pushing his theory, obstinately and cheerfully intent upon proving its correctness to Miss Mirlees; and since he was arguing a question that had become of intimate personal significance to her, she suffered him and even encouraged him by appearing to disagree.

Burrell, with the British love of putting his money on a prejudice or an opinion, offered to risk a bet on it.

"Look here, I'll lay you a wager."

Mr. Macpherson was leaning over the rail, and Burrell called him up, and, looking shrewd and sly, began to cross-question the Scotchman.

"What sort of landing shall we make at this place—Rabat, or whatever you call it?"

"That will depend on the swell, sir."

"A little uncomfortable?"

"All this coast, sir, is excessively uncomfortable. The Atlantic swell hits it. And at Rabat there is a bar."

"Takes some getting over in an open boat?"

"Sometimes you don't get over it. I have seen a surf-boat, sir, rolled over like a porpoise."

Mr. Burrell smiled.

"I rather enjoy that sort of thing. Thank you, Mr. Macpherson."

When the Scotchman had strolled away Burrell put his case to Miss Mirlees.

"Now, I will bet you—well, what shall it be?"

"Never mind about the stakes."

"Well, I bet you, Miss Mirlees, that if we have a nasty time getting over that bar at Rabat, our friend there will hoist the white flag."

"I take the bet."

"Done."

VII

THE *Santissima Isabella* lay rolling and pitching off Rabat on the green edge of the Atlantic. Between Rabat and the fort of Sali a line of white surf foamed over the bar. The *Santissima Isabella* had been hove to for an hour.

The captain, who had been signalling to the harbour-master, came down from his little bridge and joined the group on the deck. Burrell was talking to Miss Mirlees; the two French commercial travellers were creatures of misery; Craddock was leaning over the rail beside Mr. Macpherson.

The captain addressed himself to Miss Mirlees.

"They say there is too much surf on the bar for a barge to put out."

"Nonsense," said she.

The Spaniard shrugged.

"This swell may hold for days. It would be wiser to put back to Larache."

Burrell and Miss Mirlees protested.

"I have landed in worse seas than that. How much did you offer the harbour-master, captain?"

"Twenty dollars."

"Make it thirty. How many are there of us? Five. That's only six dollars apiece."

Burrell was smiling.

"What about putting it to the vote? Hands up, gentlemen."

He glanced at Craddock and then at the Frenchman.

"It is worth a little risk, getting away from this swell—what?"

Craddock did not appear to hear, for he remained leaning over the rail, staring at the white houses of Rabat. The adventure had to be explained to the two Frenchmen, and the prospect of escaping ashore, away from the heaving misery of the *Santissima Isabella*, opened to them the gates of paradise.

"If I drown, I drown, monsieur. What does it matter?"

"Splendid. That's a majority. What do you say, Mr. Craddock?"

Craddock replied with a slight turn of the head.

"Does it matter!"

Burrell threw his head back, and gave a noiseless laugh. His eyes railed Miss Mirlees.

"The decision is to risk it. Of course, anybody can go back to Larache—if they want to. Go and signal them again, captain."

There followed an interval of waiting. The baggage had been brought on deck, and the two Frenchmen lay huddled in it and on it. Mr. Macpherson walked restlessly up and down. Craddock remained leaning over the rail, eyes set upon Rabat, his face pinched and peaky. To one of the onlookers he gave the impression of a man who was paralysed, both unable and afraid to move.

Burrell and Miss Mirlees strolled towards the bridge. He glanced down at her triumphantly, and she hated him.

"The odds are in my favour."

"How?"

"Why, it's obvious. He is going to funk it."

"I have seen no signs——"

"Why, the chap's like a scared rabbit; he daren't move."

She said nothing. They turned and stood side by side, watching the line of surf at the bar, Mr. Burrell red and cheerful and confident, the girl cold and haughty. They were in conflict, silent human conflict, and she was full of the stirrings of a baffled anger. She felt that if Craddock showed fear she could use the lash of her scorn on him.

"Hallo! The bribe has worked."

Burrell pointed with the stump of his cigar, and she saw a barge full of rowers making for the bar. The steersman was standing up in the stern sheets, and with each stroke of the oars he bent forward and uttered a shrill cry. The barge laboured like a great beetle on its slowly moving legs, and when it reached the line of surf its nose seemed to disappear and then to rise high in the air.

"By Jove, she is going to be swamped!"

They heard a wail from the Arab rowers. The steersman, like a man balancing himself on the back of a horse, was calling on Allah, and cursing the men. They stuck to it. The barge came wallowing out of the spume down the back of a green roller, climbed the next one and the next, and was clear of the bar.

"Splendid!" said Mr. Burrell, putting his cigar back into his mouth. "That must have given our friend the shivers."

The barge drew alongside the steamer, the Arab boatmen standing up and shouting and showing their white teeth. The barge had shipped a good deal of water, and two of the crew were baling hard. A seaman threw a rope from the *Santissima Isabella*, and a crazy rope ladder was flung over the side.

"Baggage first."

"Then the Frenchmen."

The baggage and the men of commerce were embarked amid much shouting and scrambling. Burrell was watching Craddock, who had not shifted his position, and Miss Mirlees was watching both of them.

"Coming, Mr. Craddock."

She swung herself on to the rope ladder, descended it, and, waiting her chance, dropped into the barge, where two of the boatmen caught her. Burrell was preparing to follow her, a smile on his red face.

"Your baggage is down below, Craddock. Of course, if you are going back to Larache—"

Craddock stirred. He moved stiffly, with a queer jerkiness, rather like a mechanical figure, and giving the impression that he was making an immense inward effort to compel his body to obey his will. He followed Burrell down the ladder, clutching the rungs with nervous fingers. He seemed to have lost his sense of judgment, for he made his drop at the wrong moment, when the barge was sinking into the trough of a wave. A big Arab caught him and saved him from going overboard, but Craddock's clumsiness sent them both rolling amid the baggage and the two sick Frenchmen.

Burrell laughed, but Meg Mirlees had

watched the affair with an air of incredulous anger. She was a white woman, and she had prejudices in the matter of courage when a white man had to keep his dignity and his self-respect in the presence of brown or yellow men. She saw Craddock helped up by the Arab, and placed upon a seat. He clutched it with both hands. The barge had cast off from the steamer, and the rowers were beginning to tug at their oars.

She was conscious of pity, anger and scorn. That a man should cut such a sorry figure, especially a man who had begun to interest her. She could not bring herself to look at Craddock. She sat stiffly in the stern sheets, her eyes fixed upon the line of white foam between Sali and Rabat. She was unaware of any sense of danger, of the fact that they were about to risk their lives in the surf. She was conscious only of a man's fear, and of the way he was betraying that fear. It hurt her.

They were nearing the bar, and the rowers began to sing in chorus. Burrell had placed himself near Craddock, who sat rigid, clutching the thwart, and for one moment Miss Mirlees allowed herself a glance at the two men. She met Burrell's eyes, shrewdly smiling. The stump of the cigar was between his teeth.

"Well, what about it?"

That was the question his triumphant and ironical smile asked her.

"He may be a coward," was her inward retort, "but you are a cad."

The green back of a great roller heaved them towards the line of surf. The barge rose, sank, wallowed, with a second great wave looming over its stern. The sea boiled white about them. The steersman uttered a loud cry, and the rowers, answering it with an echoing cry, laboured at their oars.

Suddenly Craddock started up.

"Look out!"

Burrell caught him and pulled him down.

"Sit still, man; sit still."

Miss Mirlees, one hand clutching the gunwale, fixed her eyes on the walls of the town.

Next moment they were over the bar, and the Arabs were laughing and chattering like a lot of boys. Burrell still had his hand on Craddock's arm, a Craddock who was both limp and rigid, with conscious misery in his eyes.

They landed. Miss Mirlees was the first to step ashore. Burrell and Mr. Macpherson followed her. Craddock had not moved. He seemed held there by shackles of humiliation.

Burrell was smiling.

"Well, what about it?"

She gave him a look of scorn.

"Yes, I think you have won your bet."

VIII

THERE was but one hotel at Rabat where the beds were reasonably clean, and Craddock was left on the quay to choose between the Hôtel

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des Etrangers, where Miss Mirlees would be spending the night, and some ramshackle inn, where he would provide a meal for sundry enthusiastic insects. He stood there in the glare of the sun, with the salt spume still on his lips, and a fury of shame in his heart. Porters and guides importuned him, and he did not seem to hear them.

"I suppose she could never understand?" he thought.

Followed the swift and fierce challenge: "Make her understand. Face it."

He decided to face it. He engaged two Arabs to carry his baggage, and told them to lead on to the Hôtel des Etrangers.

It was a poor place, but clean, kept by a Frenchman and his wife, and it had a garden, upon which the latticed windows opened, cool with the shade of orange trees and figs. Vines scrambled over a rude loggia, where tables were set, forming an open-air *salle à manger*. Craddock was shown to his room. He sat down on a stool by the window, and from below came the voices of the people who were taking their mid-day meal in the loggia. He recognized Burrell's voice talking cheerily to someone, and the gay patter of the two French bagmen.

Craddock had to force himself to go down, and in this loggia of the Hôtel des Etrangers he was thrust by a smiling little Frenchwoman into the very arms of the ordeal. There was but one table vacant, and it stood at the far end of the loggia, and next the place where Miss Mirlees was seated.

"Voilà, monsieur."

Craddock walked towards the vacant table. He noticed that Miss Mirlees's eyes did not avoid him; they caught him waist high and looked through him as he walked towards her. Her face was calm and dispassionate.

He sat down, unfolded his serviette, and ordered wine. Burrell was at the farther end, eating joyously and talking to Mr. Macpherson. Craddock stared at him. He hated Burrell, and despised himself for hating him.

He realised that he had to say something to Miss Mirlees.

"Rather pleasant here."

There was a moment of silence before she replied, and her voice was casual.

"Quite."

"I suppose one can hire horses and mules in Rabat?"

"It is probable. Ask Mr. Macpherson; he will know."

He felt the cold bite of her disfavour. He had expected it, but it roused in him a fierce protest. He prepared to attack.

"Thank you. I hope to call on Mr. Mirlees at Casablanca."

"Indeed!"

"I have a letter of introduction to him from Sir Guy Dearmer."

He had turned in his chair, as though compelling himself to face her.

"Sir Guy Dearmer? Let me see, your name is Craddock."

"Yes—Lionel Craddock."

He became aware of the veiled and questioning surprise in her eyes. She refilled her wine-glass and raised the glass to her lips, holding it poised as though to test the bouquet of the wine. Her attitude remained deliberately casual, but behind it he sensed a rapid questioning of his identity.

"Not—the—Mr. Lionel Craddock? The man who went with a Japanese storming party in the attack on Port Arthur? The Craddock of Mexico and Cuba? No, of course you could not be."

She glanced across at him over the wine-glass, drank, and set the glass down. He was resting his elbows on the table, and his eyes observed her with a resolute and faintly ironical smile. Obviously he could not be himself, because she thought him a coward.

"But I am that Craddock."

She met his eyes, and she, too, was ironical. "Indeed!"

"Why should you doubt it?"

"Do I doubt it?"

"Evidently."

She went on with her meal, and he remembered that he had food in front of him.

"But the Craddock, whose books I have read— Yes, perhaps the books were a little romantic."

"They were true."

"And you wrote them?"

"Certainly."

She crumbled a piece of bread as though pausing for reflection.

"But the facts don't tally."

"You mean that the Craddock you had in your mind could not have been a coward?"

"I suppose so."

"Thank you."

He was smiling, but his smile had a grim edge to it.

"Miss Mirlees, what are courage and cowardice?"

"Isn't it a question of self-respect?"

"More than that. Sensitiveness, imagination. You may think that man over there brave because he is insensitive and does not feel things. And yet under certain circumstances he might play the coward."

"Does that concern us?"

"No, perhaps not. Well, I am a coward."

She retained her dispassionate air, though the human reality of the affair was pressing against the cold surface of her self-assurance. How could a man confess himself a coward, and how could she respect such a man? She might pity him. And all the while Craddock was watching her, throwing a swift and occasional glance in her direction that was like the revealing knife of a surgeon. His intuition cut deep, opened the heart of things.

"Pity is of no use to me."

She was startled. How did he know that she was pitying him? Besides, he was claiming too intimate an interest.

"Really! It had not occurred to me."

"I think it had. But pity—that sort of pity! Pity is of no use. One asks for understanding."

She gave him a full glance of the eyes.

"Is it necessary?"

"Everyone has a right to be understood, especially—"

"Especially?"

"By people who are very sure of themselves. It is good for such people. I take it that you have never known fear."

"I cannot say that I have."

"You have yet to meet it. And when it comes you will have to struggle with it. Then you may understand."

She flushed. For it seemed to her that this man was reversing the situation. He was turning her legitimate disapproval into a confession of hardness and of inexperience. He was preaching at her, setting himself up as a sort of hero who was proud of the anguish he suffered in running away.

"So I am not very intelligent?"

"No. There is something that you have not experienced. You do not understand it."

"I must confess, Mr. Craddock, that I cannot understand a man allowing an Arab crew—"

She had a glimpse of his intense eyes and the set pallor of his face.

"You cannot understand that it was beastly, horrible for me. Have you ever heard of uncontrollable fear, of the night terrors of children? You have. And yet you cannot understand that such terror—fear of some particular thing, might persist in a man or a woman? With me it has a history. As a child I went through a typhoon, and ever afterwards the sea became my terror. Sometimes I beat it; sometimes it beats me. But some people refuse to be shown the whole of life, its rotten, sorry, pathetic side. They want it ripe and polished like the good half of an apple."

He turned away from her as though he had delivered his soul, and she sat very still, looking out into the garden, hesitating between anger and the impulse of other emotions. He had touched her. He had struck her. Her pride had a hot and sensitive cheek.

"I'm sorry," she said presently.

His retort was swift and fierce.

"For me?"

"Partly."

"I do not wish you to be sorry in that way. If I have to do things, in spite of myself, the doing of them is all that matters."

She was silent, and her silence suggested a complex of feelings and impressions. She was hostile, wilfully hostile.

He pushed back his chair and rose.

"I shall present that letter to your father,

Miss Mirlees. Good morning. Perhaps we shall meet at Casablanca."

IX

DURING the journey from Rabat to Casablanca she told herself that she did not wish to meet him again. He was one of those problem men, awkward, difficult, unsatisfactory. She thought that she preferred a simpler and less complex animal.

She had not seen him since he had walked away from her table in the loggia of the hotel at Rabat, for he had gone out into the town, hired horses, a guide, a servant and two mules, and set out for Casablanca.

Yet Meg Mirlees found herself thinking of him as an interesting personality. He had impressed himself more deeply upon her than she would allow, nor could she help realising that there was a fineness in the temper of the man, a passionate, inward courage that went out to meet and fight its fear. And sometimes he was worsted, humiliated, made to suffer.

But then the things that he had done, the recklessness of some of his accomplishments. She did not doubt the truth of his adventures. He was not a boaster, nor one of those ingenious cheap-jack travellers who rush hurriedly through some country and return to write it up and advertise their audacity. He had done extraordinary things, this little, highly strung, sensitive man, greatly valiant in the midst of his tremblings.

She found that he had touched her most strangely.

But could she trust him? There was something in her, some feminine prejudice against a man who might fail in a desperate crisis.

Later she realised that she might have to see him again. Alexander Mirlees was the most hospitable of men. He liked strangers who had fought and hunted and wandered. She knew that he would not leave a man like Craddock stewing in some semi-white caravan-sarai of an hotel. The house of her father would be open to him.

She was vaguely excited, challenged. Should she tell Alexander Mirlees the truth, and persuade him to keep Craddock on the most formal of terms? A call, a dinner, one or two casual civilities, and then a casual departure. Should she meet him calmly as an ordinary acquaintance? Yes, that was the trouble. She sensed the fact that she might not be able to meet him calmly, and the discovery spurred a rather wilful pride.

"Let him come," she said to herself. "What does it matter?"

So Meg Mirlees and Mr. Macpherson and her men entered Casablanca when the sun was setting over the sea. The sights and smells of the Moorish town were pleasantly familiar. She wondered why Craddock had come to Casablanca. Nothing happened here, nothing to

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experience or to write about. She entered her father's house, that very spacious Moorish house with its garden under the town wall. He was there at the gate, waiting for her, a gaillard, handsome, powerful man with the head of a grandee and eyes that were quite fearless.

"Well, Meg, old girl, this is good."

She realised this man's strength and loved it, for it was said of Alexander Mirlees that he had never failed. The tribesmen trusted him.

"And how is everybody in the Old Country?"

"They never change. Mr. Macpherson has been telling me that the Arabs have been letting off a little powder."

Mirlees laughed.

"Just bad boys. Though Mr. Macpherson is inclined to take things a little too seriously. The French have been building a railway line here, and it has given the children a chance to throw stones."

"No more than that?"

"Oh, there is nothing in it."

She went into the courtyard with his arm about her.

"By the way, I have had a visitor, Craddock, the explorer, an interesting little chap. I think you met him on the boat?"

"Yes."

"I asked him to stay, but he seems a queer and independent beggar."

"He prefers the hotel?"

"It seems so. I have asked him to dine here to-morrow night."

Meg could not decide whether she was pleased or displeased, but when Craddock came she met him as a casual acquaintance who was her father's guest, and Craddock matched her aloofness. He was courteous, a little distant, and different. The difference of him piqued her. He was quite at his ease; he met her eyes with complete composure; he talked well and without any posing for effect. The party included two other men, and the thing that surprised Meg Mirlees was Craddock's air of dominance, for he was the central figure, the man of the moment. Even the great Mirlees listened to him as to a man who had a right to speak.

The conversation turned upon the unrest among the tribes. They had been levying blackmail on Casablanca, and a weak Moorish governor had given way to them. There was a strong anti-French feeling among the Arabs, and Abdul Aziz, the Sultan, had sent a body of troops under Moulai el Amin to watch these restless tribesmen. They were camped outside the town. Mirlees, who was popular with the Arabs, refused to take the matter very seriously. They were no more than a crowd of wild boys who must show their high spirits by firing their guns into the air.

Meg Mirlees was astonished to hear Craddock disagreeing with her father.

"There is a good deal of anxiety in the town."

Mirlees laughed.

"Call it funk, my dear Craddock. You have been listening to some of the nervous gentlemen."

Her eyes met Craddock's. She saw him smile faintly, and his smile was a challenge. "Perhaps you have told your father," it said. "If not, you may tell him, if you wish to."

The smile she returned him was ironical.

"Mr. Craddock seems to have formed his opinion very quickly. Is it possible to know so much in two days?"

"Oh, come, Meg! Craddock is an expert at getting impressions."

"Yes, I think that's it, Mr. Mirlees. I do get impressions, and I get them very quickly."

At the end of the meal she left the men together and wandered out into the coolness of the garden. There was a seat there under a vine, a hidden and secret seat, secure from all strangers, and in her perverseness she decided to remain in this dusky nook until Lionel Craddock had gone. She was conscious of a feeling of mischief. "Now, if he is so quick with his impressions, he should be able to get the impression that I have secluded myself here and become the woman invisible. He has more cheek than I thought he had. But perhaps 'cheek' is not quite the right word."

She looked up at the moon through the vine leaves, and a moment later she became aware of someone in the garden. She heard footsteps, light, regular and unhurried. They came down the path between the orange and lemon trees; they hesitated, and then resumed their march towards her. She was conscious of excitement, tense expectation. A man appeared. He was smoking a cigar; he paused at the dark opening of the recess in which the seat was placed.

"I hope you will forgive me for following you here."

She could not resist the gibe.

"Another of your swift impressions, Mr. Craddock?"

"Perhaps. But then you used to-night some particularly delightful perfume. I am rather sensitive to perfumes. It served as an Ariadne's thread."

"So it was not quite like your first impressions of Casablanca?"

"Pleasanter."

"Thank you. Not a fearful perfume!"

He stood looking down at Mirlees's daughter.

"Don't scoff. There is fear in this town."

"You feel it? I suppose that—"

"Of course I feel it. I understand fear. You need not make the obvious accusation."

"I have no wish to. But it seems—"

He came nearer and leaned against one of the pillars supporting the vine trellis.

"Miss Mirlees, I have just heard that your father proposes to go to Mazaghan and Mogador. Persuade him not to go."

"Why?"

"Because I feel that he ought not to leave you here. Macpherson is going with him. He does not take the Arabs seriously."

"Nor do I."

"Then go with Mr. Mirlees."

She rose from the seat.

"Really, Mr. Craddock, I believe you are trying to make a coward of me. Is it necessary? I shall stay here, just to test the value of your impressions."

He stood aside.

"I'm sorry. Why make it a personal matter?"

"I assure you my curiosity is quite impersonal."

"Then perhaps you will let me speak to your father?"

"Would not that be rather impertinent, when my father has known Morocco for twenty years?"

"I admit the apparent impertinence. But, believe me, Miss Mirlees, sometimes when one comes fresh to a place one picks up the atmosphere."

"Or imports one's own atmosphere. May I say that I should resent your interference?"

X

So Alexander Mirlees set out for Mogador, but Craddock remained at Casablanca, refusing Mirlees's suggestion that he should accompany him and Mr. Macpherson and profit by another man's knowledge of the country. The little hotel, kept by a fine fellow of a Spaniard, suited Craddock admirably. It was clean and it was fairly comfortable, and the Spaniard was a man of parts, a stout fellow of great shrewdness and courage. Craddock spent his time in exploring Casablanca and in improving his Arabic. Most days he took a short ride outside the walls, where the brown land met the blue of the sea. Once or twice he was warned not to ride too far, and white figures cantered up to him, some of Caid Moulay's troopers busy exercising their horses.

For a week he did not go near the house of the Mirleeses, but his restraint was purposeful and full of sagacity.

On the eighth day he pulled the iron chain of the Mirleeses' bell and stood waiting outside the massive door. A negro opened it to him; the black could speak English.

Craddock sent in his card. He was left waiting in the handsome courtyard, with its fountain, and its arcaded galleries, and its beds of carefully watered flowers. In a minute the negro returned and, salaaming, desired Craddock to follow him.

Meg Mirlees received Craddock in a room that was part boudoir, part library. There was a divan by the screened window, and beside it an Oriental stool bearing a large brass tray. The room was full of books, hunting trophies and arms. It was the room of a woman who could ride and shoot.

She made a sign to Craddock to join her on the divan.

"Sambo is bringing tea. So you are still in Casablanca?"

"Obviously."

He smiled, and his eyes held hers.

"Obviously. My Spaniard is a fine gentleman."

"Excellent. And you have discovered no excitements yet? The place seems quite tame."

"I should not say that."

"You are still reacting to atmospheres?"

"Certainly."

She laughed, but her laughter was friendly.

"Do you still believe that something is going to happen here?"

"I do."

"Something terrible?"

"Perhaps."

"Then it is rather brave of you to stay."

"That is no reason."

"No?"

"I feel responsible."

"Indeed! For what?"

"The obstinacy I appear to have provoked in you. Besides, I prefer to stay."

The negro brought in tea, and as she handed Craddock his cup she gave him a look of irony and of humour.

"You accuse me of obstinacy, and your real reason for staying here is to prove me wrong."

He appeared intent upon his tea cup.

"Think that if it pleases you."

"I shall."

"But it is not the true reason. One does not ask to see a town converted into a temporary hell in order to be able to say, 'I told you so.' I go deeper than that."

It was true, and she knew it, and she was strangely moved by the quiet impressiveness of his attack. She began to think that she liked the tensely strung temper of him, his unexpectedness, his adroit manœuvring for position. She had been hunted by many men, and had found their methods stereotyped, and unoriginal, and she had always been able to foresee each conventional move. Craddock was different. She felt that she never quite knew what he was going to do or say.

"Supposing I grant that?" she said.

"I should take it as a signal graciousness. And then——"

"And then——?"

"I should ask you to go on board an English boat that is lying off the town."

"And, of course, I should refuse."

"That seemed to me probable."

"And the next move?"

"I should wait for the moment when a crisis became imminent. I should come here and see you on board."

"I don't think that plan would work."

"It might. I should have the English Consul with me. Then, of course, I should come back here to see the business through."

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She proceeded to refill his tea cup.

"So the man would stay and the woman run away."

"As civilisation is ordered that is a law of nature."

"Man made."

"Certainly. But accepted by women. There are some most horribly real situations which a woman should have no share in."

"How?"

His steady but nervous hand took the tea cup from her. "A man can fight it out and have his throat cut. But a woman—no. That is why it is your duty to all white men to play for safety. Women are a disaster when a fanatical mob gets loose."

There was silence between them for some seconds, and when next she spoke her voice was more soft, though it had lost none of its resolution.

"Allow me to have the pride of a white woman. Women can fight, you know, sometimes. And perhaps there is more to fight for—when——"

He looked her straight in the eyes.

"There would be. I would ask for nothing ore splendid if such things always ended nicely, as they do on the stage."

No more passed between them, and each remained resolute and conscious of the other's resolution; but during the next few days ominous things began to happen. The tribesmen, assembling outside the town, sent a deputation to Ben Bouzid, the Governor, demanding that the country should be cleared of the French. The French Consul, a man of great experience, was away on leave, and the weak Ben Bouzid, after temporising and consulting one of the oldest of the English merchants, did nothing. Anxiety spread in Casablanca, and the interpreter at the French Consulate sent off a message to Tangier to ask for the dispatch of a warship.

Two days later the wild tribesmen began to enter the town and to stir up the inhabitants. Craddock had gone to the English Consulate when more sinister news was brought. The Arabs had attacked the train and the workmen at the quarry, and had slain several of the men and mutilated their bodies.

Craddock was unarmed, but he went straight to the house of Alexander Mirlees, and in one of the streets he was spat upon by a tall Arab who was rushing through the town, waving his rifle and calling on the Mahommedans to rise against the infidels. The gate of the Mirleeses' house was closed, and when Craddock rang the gate-bell a grill was opened, and through the bars of it he saw the face of the old negro.

"I wish to see Miss Mirlees."

"I have orders, sah, not to open the gate."

"Tell Miss Mirlees that I am here. I must speak with her at once."

She came down to him at the gate, and her handsome and ironical face was framed for

him in the square of the grill, with the courtyard garden for a background.

"Has anything happened?"

"The Arabs have attacked the white workmen and killed several of them. The town is seething with fanatics."

"You think it is serious?"

"That is why I am here. The Consuls are preparing to evacuate the Europeans. No one is safe in the streets."

"Are you armed?"

"No. I left my revolver at my hotel."

She stood close to the gate, with the fingers of one hand spread upon the bars of the grill.

"It was good of you to come."

"That's nothing. What matters is your safety."

"I am perfectly safe here. The Arabs will respect the house of Alexander Mirlees."

"Nonsense! You will have to pardon my frankness. It is justified."

"I do not agree."

"My dear Miss Mirlees, have you ever seen a fanatical mob? I have. It respects nothing. It is like a mad beast. Nothing is sacred."

"I think you exaggerate."

He laid a hand on the grill, and she was aware of a new fierceness in him.

"Very well. I shall go back to the Consulate, get a party together, and come back here. You will have to go with us. I insist."

"By what right?"

"A man's right—a white man's right. I am not here to spout silly sentiment."

"Thank you. It seems that you and your party would be worse than the Arabs. This house is very strong. I trust my servants; we have arms. In fact, I think that this place is safer. Why not send some of your frightened people here? We could stand a siege."

"I cannot believe that you are serious."

"I am serious, Mr. Craddock. Besides, have all your people forgotten Caid Moulai and his soldiers? Caid Moulai is a friend of my father's. I know him well. He is a great gentleman and a man of honour. Moulai would soon master the mob."

Craddock gave her a passionate look.

"You do not believe in me? It is understandable. And yet——"

The dark eyes behind the grill took on a new expression.

"No, it is not that. Let us make a bargain. If Caid Moulai does not hold Casablanca tame within the next two days I will listen to your advice."

"You promise?"

"I promise."

XI

For the moment the event appeared destined to prove Meg Mirlees right, for Caid Moulai entered Casablanca with his soldiers on the following day and order was restored. He placed guards over the consulates and patrolled

the streets of the town, and when Craddock visited the house of the Mirleeses he found a couple of tall Arabs posted at the gate.

Yet, as Craddock knew, the French colony had not regained its confidence; the panic continued, and people were making use of Moulai's intervention to embrace safety before some worse thing might happen.

Meg Mirlees met him smiling. He had been brought to her in the garden, and to that same shaded seat where he had come so near to quarrelling with her on the night when he had dined with her father.

"What do you think of my two sentries?"

"Strapping fellows. But they don't prove me wrong."

"You were able to come through the streets with nothing but a switch in your hand."

"And a loaded revolver inside my shirt."

"But you did not need it."

"Perhaps that was my luck. My Spanish friend keeps his gate locked and all his shutters closed, and he has a rifle and ammunition laid out nicely on a table."

"Any other indications?"

"They are shipping the whole French colony on board the *Demetria*."

"Women and children?"

"And men."

"The men, too!"

"They appear to have no desire to stay."

He stood leaning against the stone pillar, and she felt his alert calmness, an almost humorous calmness. He seemed to her to be the least fearful of men, proof against the impulses of panic, and so unlike the Craddock of the Rabat surf-boat, that she found it difficult to reconcile her contending impressions. She remembered his frank confession: "Sometimes fear beats me; sometimes I beat fear." But this time she could not doubt but that he would be the victor. She was glad, inwardly exultant. Almost she wished to see him tested, to be shown the courage of the little superman who could master the prancings of his own terror.

"What do you really believe?" she asked.

He took a moment to reply, and the conviction in his voice impressed her.

"I still feel that something is going to happen."

"But why?"

"I don't know. That is the feeling I have. It is not that I am being affected by the French panic. This is an interlude."

"But our bargain holds good."

"A bargain is a bargain, even though—"

"Even though you think it foolish?"

"Not foolish."

"What, then?"

"Provocative, terribly provocative. You are the most perilous adventure I have ever risked."

"And you will put it in a book?"

"Both of us may be beyond books—this world's books."

She looked into his steady eyes.

"In the old days they would have said that you were fey."

"It may be that I am," he retorted gravely.

He left her realising that it was far more than the mere crudeness of physical happenings that fascinated them, and that the intimate personal reaction of such happenings held the vital secret of life. The eternal spiritual struggle, the play of temperament upon temperament. Why was she drawn to him and him to her? Why had she begun to know that this man had the makings of her inevitable mate? Passion! What a poor thing was passion without the mystery of loving something that was beyond the flesh, something that had the intangible splendour of a quenchless curiosity. This man would always be daring, and attempting some new enterprise, and setting off on it with a boyish seriousness in his eyes. He would be full of surprises, adventurous appeals. She could hear him saying: "Meg, let's go and climb the Andes. I can do it with you." And she felt that if he could win through with one convincing act of courage she would go with him to the ends of the earth.

Craddock strolled back slowly to his hotel. No man looked blackly at him, or spat or threw fanatical curses, and yet he had a sureness in him that the agony of Casablanca was to come. The seeming realities of the moment gave him a flat contradiction. It appeared that old Moulai el Amin held Casablanca in the hollow of his hand. Yet something would happen. A spark would be dropped, a chance stone thrown. The incalculable incident would arrive. Craddock was even conscious of the incalculable. Nothing is more certain than in the great game of life human nature will surprise you.

Next day the fatal spark arrived. From the roof of his hotel Craddock and his Spanish host saw a little French gunboat steam in out of the blue and anchor off the town. She looked very small and unpretentious, a mere shadow of a trifling gesture made by a big and distant hand.

Craddock had one foot on the parapet and an elbow resting on his knee.

"What do you make of it?"

The Spaniard stroked his beard.

"That fly has a sting."

"Stings are dangerous, unless they can paralyse. If the French have the sense to let well alone."

"Señor," said the Spaniard, "that is the very last thing men learn to do."

XII

In a little while it had happened.

That spitfire of a gunboat, full of hot-headed young men, lay rolling at anchor with guns that were ashamed to be silent. Frenchmen had been killed, and here were other

THE GREATER COURAGE

Frenchmen lusting to plump their shells into the Arab quarters and to read these savages a lesson. "Vive la France, and give them high explosive." The gunboat *Galile* could sting; she was a wasp, a mosquito but the human cattle in Casablanca an wild cattle from the hills might be driven to madness by this hornet of the seas.

The civilians and the sailors could not

in the streets when this small landing party of French bluejackets let its panic-rage loose in Casablanca. Hearing the shots and the uproar, he made his way back to his hotel, to find the Spaniard closing the shutters.

"The mad thing has happened, señor."

He was contemptuous, fierce, as he went round slamming the shutters and shooting the bolts to safeguard the residents.

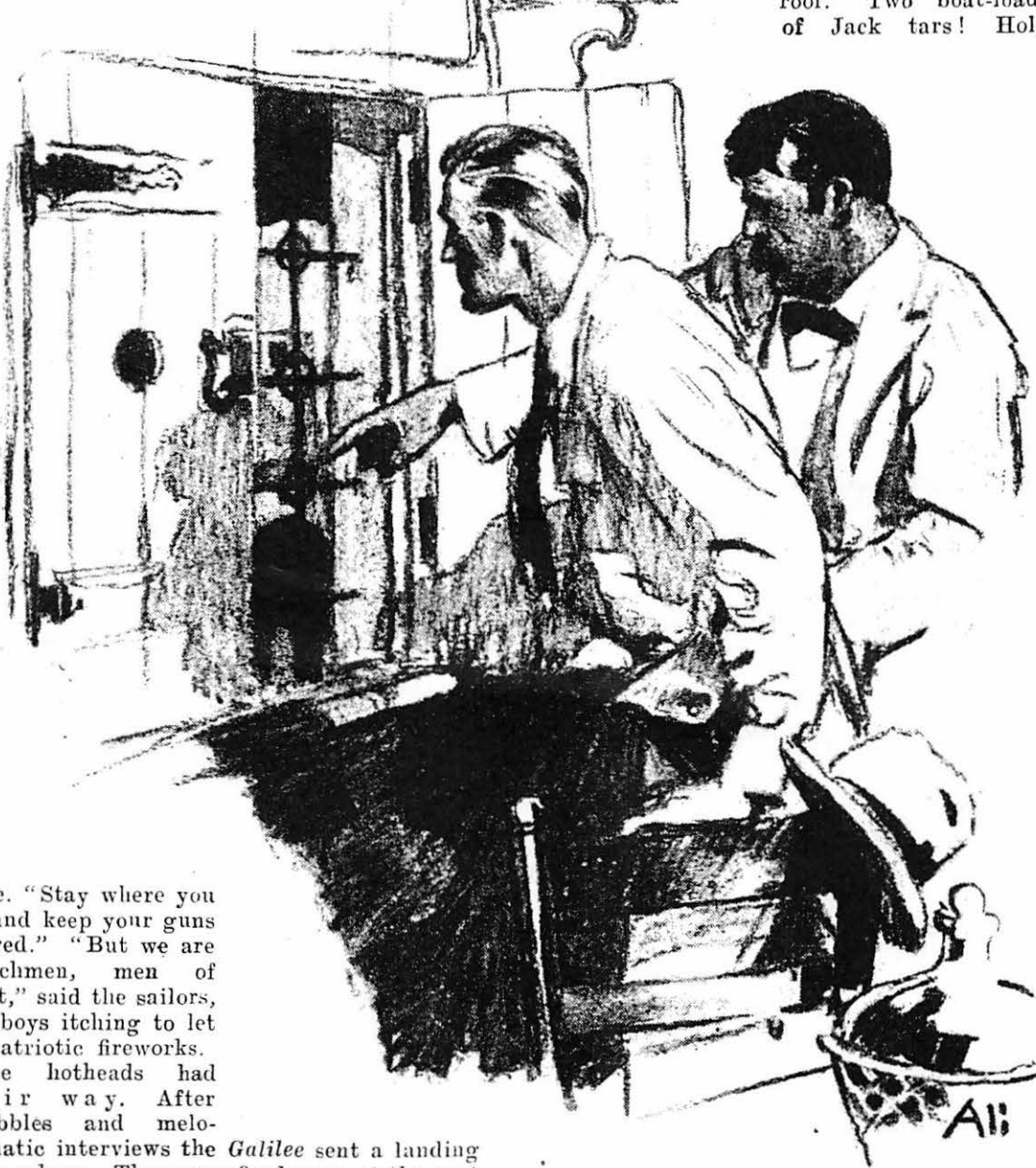
"I saw it from my roof. Two boat-loads of Jack tars! Holy

agree. "Stay where you are and keep your guns covered." "But we are Frenchmen, men of spirit," said the sailors, like boys itching to let off patriotic fireworks.

The hotheads had their way. After squabbles and melodramatic interviews the *Galilee* sent a landing party ashore. They were fired upon at the port gate, perhaps by some of Caid Moulai's men, who, being good Mohammedans doing their job, resented the interference of the infidel. The French broke in, blooded and seeing red. The fighting fool was loose with cartridge and bayonet. Anything with a face that was not white became an enemy to be shot at.

So it began.

Craddock was one of those who was caught



He drew Craddock to one of the shuttered windows

Mother, do they think that they can overawe a town such as this with two dozen or so boys in blue, who begin to let off their popguns directly somebody makes an ugly face at them?"

"What do you think will happen?"

"Come here, señor."

He drew Craddock to one of the shuttered windows and, opening the shutter, pointed to the deep shadowiness of the narrow street. There was a strange silence, an ominous silence.

"See. It is empty. Over there, if you remember, there was a post of Moulai's men. They have gone. By now that handful of Frenchmen is shut up in the consulate, helpless. And the next act—?"

"What can they do?"

The Spaniard's black eyes were fierce.

"What do men do, señor, when they have made fools of themselves? Proceed to some worse folly, as a rule. If that infernal gunboat begins to bark—"

"We shall have trouble."

"We shall have hell."

"A mob."

"Exactly. With Moulai's men backing their fellows and the tribesmen. Can one blame them? Loot. The Jews. Any white man or woman."

Craddock turned quickly from the window, with the grimness of fear in his eyes; but it was not fear for himself. He was breathing hard, yet his nostrils looked pinched.

"I am going out," he said.

Under his loose linen coat he had a revolver and an ammunition pouch fastened to his belt. The Spaniard saw him unbutton his coat, unfasten the flap of the pouch, and glance at the cartridges as though he were counting them.

"I would stay here, señor. There will be two of us."

Craddock looked at him, but his eyes did not seem to see the Spaniard.

"I have a woman to think of."

The Spaniard understood.

Craddock had not gone fifty yards along the street when the first shell from the *Galilee* came whining into Casablanca. It struck the old Moorish fort, and as the roar of the detonation died away Craddock heard a strange sound spring up, as though a sudden wind was sweeping through the narrow streets and dark, winding passages of the town. It was a human sound, indescribably terrible, made up of wails and shouts and mutterings, the first ululations of an angry mob. It died away, and rose again with the ominous bursting of a second shell.

Craddock ran. He was not ashamed to run, for the fear in him was urgent and fierce and human. His whole consciousness seemed to be projecting itself towards that great white house under the town wall, and yet as he ran he was aware of things happening about him. Faces at narrow windows, frightened faces, sinister faces. Someone cursed him. A great brown pot crashed on the stones behind him. "The infidel!" A man rushing out from the mouth of a narrow passage, with an old flintlock in his hands, let out a shrill yell and

raised the gun to his shoulder. It missed fire, and Craddock heard the man cursing it as he quickly turned a corner and entered another street.

The luck was with him, for he missed the first cloud-scud of the fanatical storm, and, still running, came to the passage-way that led to the open space in front of Alexander Mirlees's house. The high noon sun poured down into the open space, and at first Craddock thought it was empty. Moulai's two sentries had disappeared. He could not see the gateway, for it was in the side of the house, and recessed under the white and windowless wall.

"Good," he thought; "I'm in time."

He was half-way down the passage when he saw two figures detach themselves from the house. They had emerged from the gateway, two tall Arabs, one in a red burnous, the other in blue. They were looking back towards the gate, and snarling like baffled dogs. One of the Arabs carried a gun; the other had nothing but an old sabre.

The man with the gun raised it, as though to fire at Mirlees's gate; and Craddock, as he ran towards them, saw the fellow's brown face pressed against the butt of the rifle. Craddock's shot rang out half a second before the Moor's. He saw the muzzle of the gun jerked in the air, and the red figure sinking like a woman's dress when she lets it slip to her feet before stepping out of it.

The fellow with the old sabre came leaping in the sunlight. Craddock steadied himself and waited, and then shot him as he would have shot a charging Dervish.

He ran to the gate. It was closed, and so was the grille; but he had a feeling that there was someone standing behind the gate. He shouted.

"Hallo! Miss Mirlees!"

The grille was opened, and he saw her dark eyes, grave and profound.

"You!"

"Yes, I had to shoot those fellows. Those damned fools of French!"

She was unbolting the gate, and he stepped back to look towards the passage. She saw his chin go up, and the hand that held the revolver make a significant movement.

"More of them."

She swung back the gate.

"Quick!"

He was in and helping her to shoot the clumsy bolts. He noticed that she carried a pistol.

"The mob is loose. More of them coming up the passage. They will see their dead."

He shot the grille, and laying an unceremonious hand upon her arm, pushed her out of the gateway.

"Sorry, but that gate is not bullet-proof. I'll do the talking. How many men have you here?"

(Continued on page 669)

She answered him, smiling into his eyes as though he had something to forgive.

"Not one."

He seemed to bristle. His eyes had a blue glare in them.

"Skedaddled! I thought so."

"I found it out less than ten minutes ago. I came and found the gate open. The women, too."

"The house of an infidel is unhealthy when this sort of business starts. Hallo, they are there. Keep back."

He pressed her back behind the angle of the wall, but he himself remained in the gateway. He heard blows upon the gate, shouts, and very coolly he walked to the gate, slipped the grille open with the muzzle of his revolver, keeping well clear of it and close to the strong timber.

"This house—"

But whatever he had meant to say he was given no chance of saying it. There were yells. A man tried to thrust a rifle through the grille. Craddock shot him and closed it, and as he did so a bullet came through the door and ripped his coat at the shoulder.

He stepped back, with his face to the gate.

"A near shave that! Have you got a rifle anywhere?"

"Yes."

"Get it. Stop. I suppose there is no other way in?"

"No. The windows towards the street are too narrow—and too high up."

"Good. Get that rifle. I can make that gate a bit unhealthy."

She was back almost before he had realised her absence; in fact, he had not realised it, so intent was he on watching the gate. It was a very massive gate, but the bulk of it seemed to be vibrating like the skin of a drum. And outside it a crowd of religious madmen howled and struggled, while above the yells some heavy tool beat out heavy blows like a great heart.

Craddock took the rifle from her and knelt on one knee on the stones. He guessed that the Arabs were trying to beat in the grille cover with an axe or hammer.

"Keep back!"

He fired, and a scream raised a shrill note in the chorus. He fired again, and after a babble and a muttering of rage and of dismay, a gradual silence fell. Craddock and Meg Mirlees looked at each other, and the look went deep into the heart of each.

"They have left the gate."

She was leaning against the wall, rather pale, but perfectly calm.

"I suppose we had better make up our minds to see it out here. The streets will be impossible."

Craddock reloaded the rifle.

"Quite impossible. By the way, how much ammunition have you?"

"Only ten rounds for that rifle."

"That's rather unfortunate," he said.

XIII

THEY maintained the same attitude of casual and half-amused indifference even when they set about preparing for what might prove to be the last act.

"I suppose they will come back?"

Craddock had made a little pile of his revolver cartridges, and was counting them as though they were pieces of gold.

"I think we must count on that. There are various possibilities. If a French squadron arrives in time to clear up the mess before it has got too nasty—I wonder how they are getting on at the consulates?"

He had counted his cartridges and slipped them back into the pouch. His movements were deliberate, and his eyes steady.

"It may be a question of holding out until we are rescued. Which is the strongest part of the house?"

"My room. Come and see. We can leave the gate for a moment."

A stairway led from the courtyard into a latticed gallery, and from this gallery a narrow passage some twenty feet in length gave access to Meg Mirlees's suite of rooms. The passage was very dark, and anyone entering it from the sunlit court would see but little until his eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness. Craddock stood and considered for a moment.

"Yes, barricade the far end of it. One can shoot down this passage. Which way do your windows face?"

"On to the garden."

"Are they overlooked?"

"From the town wall."

"Then we shall have to do without lights. The thing will be to sit tight and say nothing. Now, what about food and water?"

"I'll see to that."

"Will you? Excellent. I will go and squat by the gate until you have got in the supplies, and then we will see about barricading the passage."

She gave him a long look and a significant smile.

"You were right."

"I'm sorry," he said. "One can't help being right—sometimes."

They made their preparations, closing the shutters and barricading the passage with heavy furniture and mattresses; nor was there any further attack made that day upon the house of Alexander Mirlees. The French bombardment had ceased during the afternoon. Casablanca seemed to have grown more quiet, and when Meg Mirlees made tea and they sat on her divan in the dim light of the shuttered room, they pretended to make a joke of the whole business. They were English in their refusal to appear serious and tragic when each knew how grimly serious the situation was. Yet, there were little intimate touches, moments when they looked at each other with profound understanding. The great thing was

happening to both of them, and they discovered a kind of deep delight in eluding the reality, and in pretending to play at life while death and love were waiting to grapple each other.

About sunset Craddock grew restless. The great house was like a closed box, and all the sounds of the happenings without came to it with a muffled indistinctness.

"I think I'll go up on the roof and try and make out what is happening."

"I'll show you the way."

"You may do that, but I don't want you on the roof."

"But it is share and share alike."

"Not quite that. I have a man's prejudices."

She showed him the stair leading to the roof, and he crawled out on the flat surface, and above the parapet he saw the redness of

told her the truth about himself; she felt it, embraced it.

There were glasses and a decanter on the Moorish table. She had filled a glass for him, and her hand held it out.

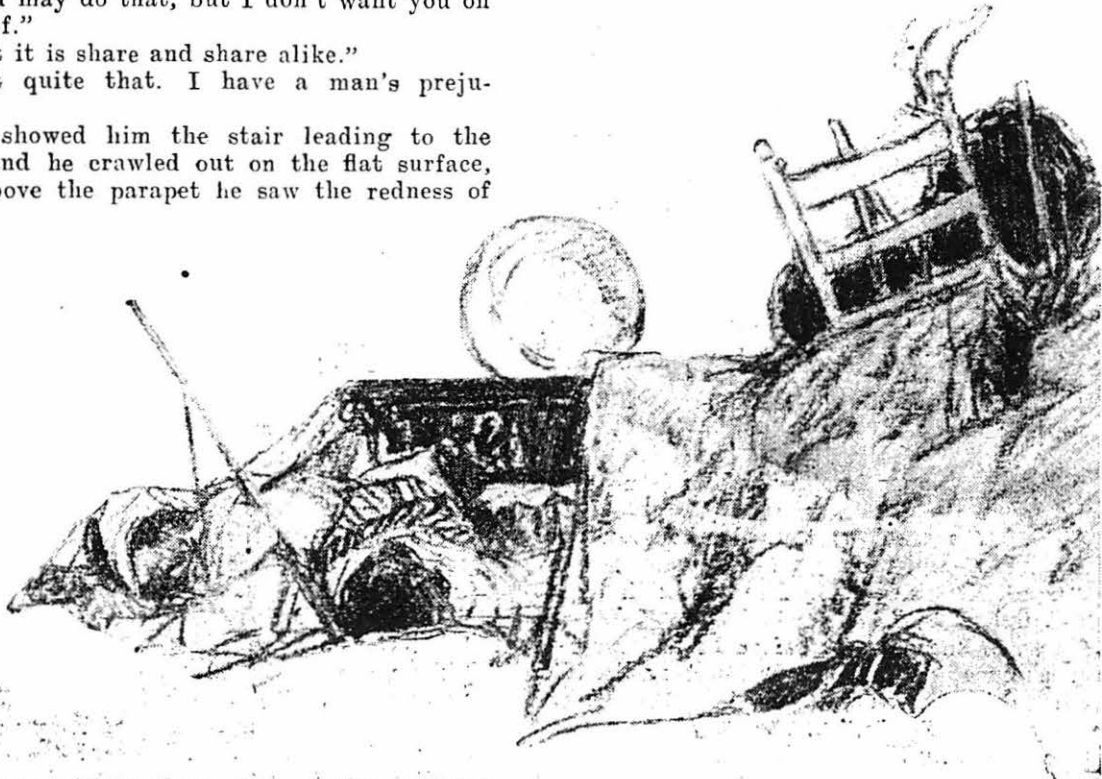
"Habit is a great god! I suppose you are English about dinner time?"

He took the glass of whisky from her.

"Thanks. Do you think I need it?"

She gave him a look of profound meaning.

"No," she replied; "you are braver than I am."



the sunset. But there was another redness above Casablanca, the glare of burning houses, and from the innumerable dark crevices rose a vague clamour, sinister and strange. Occasional shots rang out, and once Craddock heard a woman scream. The shrill note of terror held for a moment, and then fluttered into silence, like a bird shot while on the wing.

Craddock was filled with a sense of foreboding. He could see the *Galilee* lying black out yonder against the sunset, a solitary and mischievous sea-sprite, unable to control the horrors that it had created. When would the French ships arrive? Would they arrive in time?

He crawled back to the stairhead, telling himself that when darkness fell the real terror would begin; yet when he rejoined Meg in the room below he appeared casual and calm.

"Nothing much to be seen. A few houses burning."

His very calmness made her understand how great the danger was. And she loved this calmness of his, this most convincing mood of courage. Was this the man who had clung to the thwart in the Rabat surf-boat? He had

"I question that. But, then, you do know now—"

"I know what fear is. I am rather proud of the discovery."

Night came. They sat and talked, and sometimes they listened, yet nothing happened, and the silence made the suspense seem heavier. Every now and again Craddock scrambled over the barricade, and went down into the courtyard to assure himself that the gate had not been forced. He had begun to wonder whether they would be attacked. Yet there were those dead men lying outside the gate, and blood called for blood.

About midnight a sudden restlessness came upon him. They were sitting in the dark room, smoking cigarettes and talking in low voices, when Craddock thought that he heard a sound somewhere in the empty house. He climbed the barricade, and had reached the stairs leading to the courtyard when he was aware of a movement in the open space below.

For a moment he was undecided as to what to do, and as to how this lurker had made

THE GREATER COURAGE

He retreated quickly to the top of the stairway and remained quite still, but in the dim light he saw the courtyard fill with white-robed figures, moving with a kind of hungry stealth. The silence of them was ominous. These men had a purpose; they were not mere looters, mad and yelling, a rabble drunk with its own noise.

He slipped back into the passage and over the barricade.

"Will you load for me?"

"Then—they are here?"

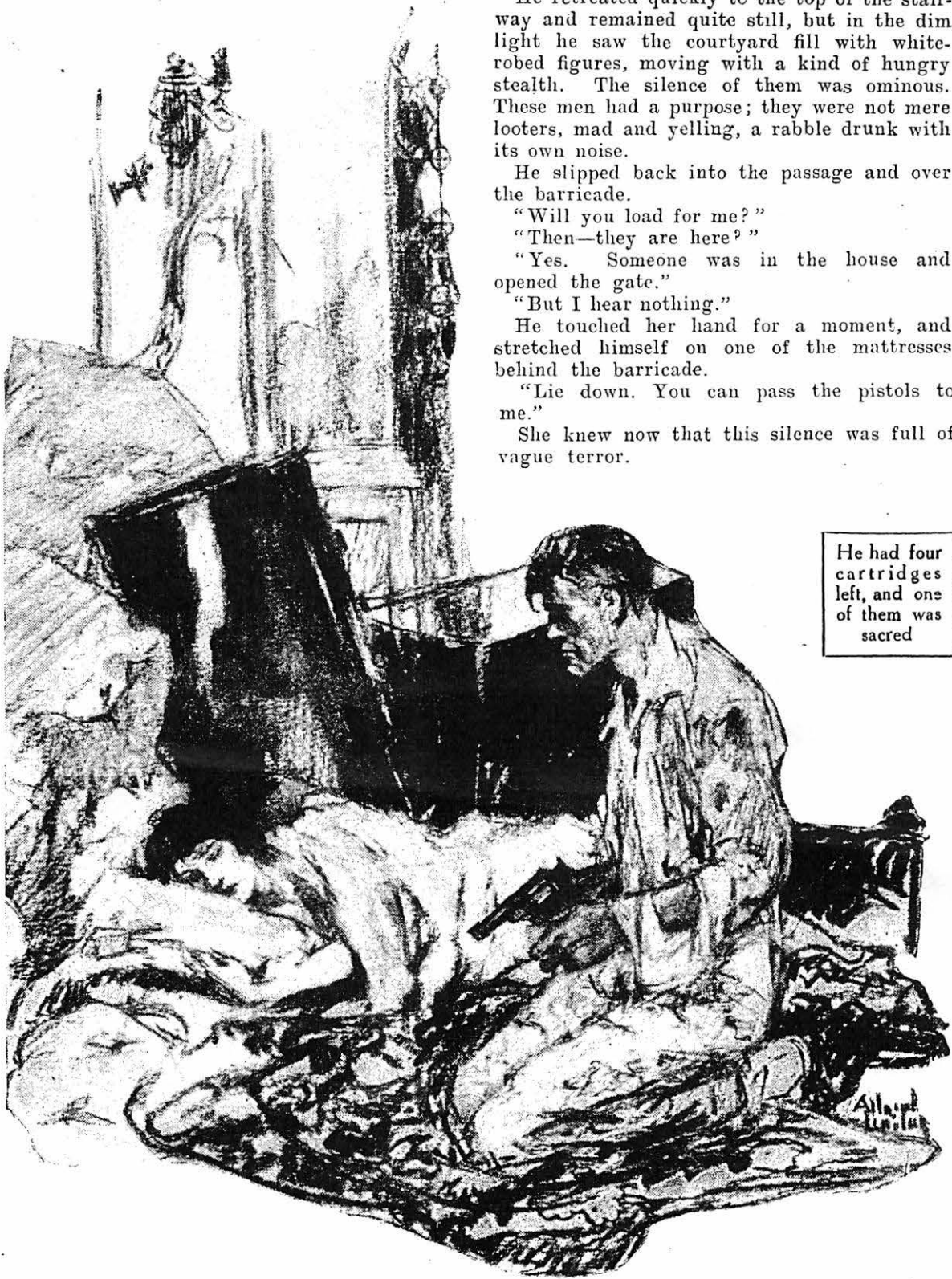
"Yes. Someone was in the house and opened the gate."

"But I hear nothing."

He touched her hand for a moment, and stretched himself on one of the mattresses behind the barricade.

"Lie down. You can pass the pistols to me."

She knew now that this silence was full of vague terror.



He had four
cartridges
left, and one
of them was
sacred

his way into the place. He realised that it might be one of the servants, who had been in hiding and had emerged from his hiding-place. But he remained silent. He began to descend the stairway. He was half-way down it when he heard the sound of the gate being opened, and the padding of naked feet.

XIV

DAWN came.

It was the dawn of the second day.

She lay asleep beside him on the mattress behind the barricade, and he—looking at her with eyes that ached—saw the soft whiteness

of her sleeping profile and the black tangle of her hair.

He had four cartridges left, and one of those was sacred. For more than thirty hours he had held that barricade, without sleep, eating where he lay, and she had helped him. Had ever a man had a finer comrade, a more splendid mate? Just four cartridges! And those sullen fanatics, lurking there, raging relentlessly over their dead, ready to crawl over the sprawling bodies. It had become a trial of endurance, of stolid and ferocious cunning. One more attack would see the end.

He looked at the woman.

She slept.

Should he do it while she slept, save her the horror and the heroism of that last decision?

Was there any hope, the merest glimmer of hope?

There might be. He could not shoot her while there was.

She woke. Her hand touched his arm, as though to be reassured. She sat up.

"Daylight!"

"Yes."

"Are they still there?"

He nodded.

"You remember?"

"Just four cartridges. Yes, I remember."

She stood up.

"Dear—let us go in the daylight. I am not afraid."

He watched her. She went to the windows and opened the shutters, and the morning light flooded the room. It showed him to her as a man with a harsh white face, with a bullet mark across one cheek, and his left shoulder and sleeve all blood. He looked fierce, emaciated, but behind his fierceness shone the spirit of the great lover.

She threw herself on the mattress beside him.

"Oh, my man!"

He caught her and held her.

"Have you the courage to do it?"

"I have."

"Let it be here. I'll undo my dress. Not in the head, dear."

"If it has to be it shall be."

They kissed. And then he scrambled up on his knees, tense, listening. He had heard some sound. He turned sideways, and his eyes held hers. They listened.

There were men moving in the courtyard. They heard a voice hailing the horror of the silent house, a French voice.

"Is there anyone alive here?"

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BOARDED WINDOWS, and a tempest of tortured
Tancred crossed a perfunctory French road
and stopped to stare, because he was in the mood for
staring. He was staying at the Hôtel du Prince,
having been told by a man at his club that it was the
only place where you could get a private bathroom.
Bicherta had begun to experience the persuasiveness of
the plumber.

But Bicherta had not yet become the complete fool of
fashion. She retained her heather-clad cliffs and her
cocks and her green Atlantic rollers, and
the unsullied saltiness of her sea winds.
True, the proprietors of the Hôtel du Prince
had created a nine-hole golf course between
the gas works and the pine woods of St.
Crambo, but as yet no orgy of villas con-
cealed the magnificence of the mountains.
Tancred stood outside the rusty iron
gates.

"Hello, a ghost house!"

That was his inward comment; his sa-
lute to the gray bulk of the house half
hidden in the twilight of its stormy pines
and cypresses and ragged old tamarisk
trees. Tancred could see some boarded
windows and the curve of what had been
a drive. Beyond the tempestuous tangle
of growth, blue sky and green sea showed.
The iron gates were peeling with rust.
The high stone wall had its coping broken
in places.

A chilly draft blew through the gate.
Somewhere a bough creaked, and Tancred
had one of those strange moments when
something in the subconscious stirs and
shivers.

They had sent him out to Bicherta
for his health. His doctor had uttered
warnings: "Now, don't do anything silly.
Coddle yourself for a month. Don't stand
about in a north wind." And something
in Tancred shivered. Was it this dim,
forlorn house, or the chilliness of the
gateway, or the strange stirrings of a
memory?

He put a hand to a leaf of the iron gate,
and pushed. It creaked and opened to
him. It seemed to grumble advice. "Yes;
come in here. Don't stand out in that cold wind. Yes;
I'm not opened very often. Usually I am chained and
padlocked, but the chain was pretty well rusted through,
and they are getting me a new one. They do not hurry
in Bicherta. Besides, I belong to the dead things."

Tancred walked up the drive to the house. It was of
gray stone and stucco, and in the pretentious style of
the late Empire. Its boarded windows gave it a blind
air. Even the trees, blown by the prevailing wind,
seemed to lean away from it in horror.

Tancred stood and stared. "I have seen it before—
somewhere. But how could I have seen it before?"

The house had been built close to the edge of the
cliff. There was a low stone wall, a terrace, steps, a
gate. Tancred leaned over the stone wall. He could
see that flight of steps cut in the face of the cliff zig-
zagging to a little bay sheeted with yellow sand. The
bay was like a smuggler's cave, secret, and shut in by
two rocky crescents over which the green rollers spumed.
"What a site," he thought, "and how strangely dere-
lict!"

No one had interfered with him, and his mood was
for further exploration. Was
it possible to get into the
house? He walked along the
terrace towards a raised log-
gia that had been built to
catch the morning sun.

Suddenly something hap-
pened. An old woman ap-
peared round a corner of
the house, a formidable old
woman. Her surprise was
as great as Tancred's. She
stood still for a moment
and stared at him.

He raised his hat. He
said, in indifferent French:
"Madame, I'm afraid I'm
intruding."

SHE WAS MORE
urgent and less polite. He
saw that she was carrying
a new chain and padlock.
She was tall and bony. She
advanced on him, flourish-
ing the chain.

Her French poured forth,
and it was patois. His im-
pression was that she called
him a brigand, a prowler.
Her gray hair blew about
her forehead.

Again Tancred tried an
apology. "Madame, please
excuse me; the house looked
empty, and I was interested.
Perhaps it is for sale?"

But she was in no parleying temper. Almost she
menaced him with the chain. She pointed in the direc-
tion of the gate.

"Go. No one is permitted to enter."

He smiled, nodded and obeyed her. Obviously he was
trespassing. She followed him to the rusty gate, and
chained and padlocked it after him. He raised an iron-
ical hat.

"Madame, apologies."

But he was not feeling apologetic. The incident had
raised strange memories. It was as though old associa-
tions had been suggested, dim paths opened up. He had



The Ghost in the Villa

seen a lonely child, and an orphan for eighteen years. His father, that most eccentric and violent of men, had been drowned at sea, and under curious circumstances.

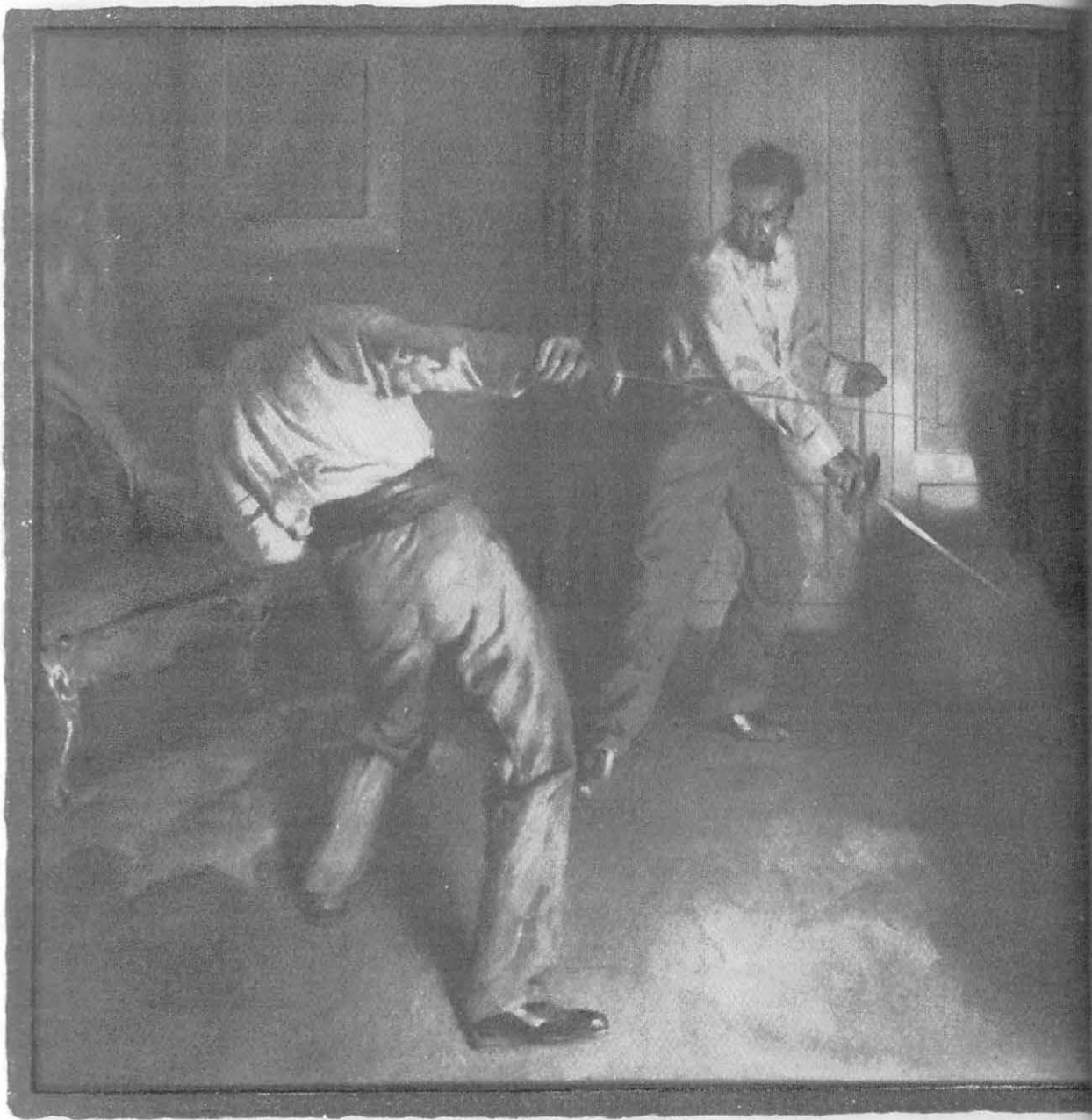
His mother—he could not remember his mother. She had died somewhere in France when he was a mere toddler. He had understood or felt that there had been some shadow over his mother and over his childhood.

He went back to his hotel, but he was unexplainably

He wandered up and down, and suddenly he found himself transfixed, staring. He was standing opposite a white monolith, and upon its base he read a name

CATHERINE TANCRED
Who Passed Away June, 1910

He stood and stared, and his forehead felt moist and his knees strangely flaccid. His mother had been that



uneasy. He could not get that derelict house and garden out of his head. Like a gray ghost, it haunted him.

His doctor had said, "Take plenty of exercise; walk," and Sir Roger Tancred walked. A sunny morning took him inland towards the pine woods, past the new golf course where elderly gentlemen were hitting white balls. He saw ahead of him groups of towering cypresses and a high white wall. It was the cemetery. The iron gates stood open, and he walked in.

A cemetery in England would not have attracted him, but this was different. It had sunlight and shadow and beautiful trees. There were flowers contrasting with the queer *pâtisserie* effect of French monuments and graves. There were photographs and bead wreaths.

*The man of violence came ashore and found
He took one and gave the young Spaniard*

Catherine Tancred. She had died in France. She had died in Bicherta. Most extraordinary of coincidences! He had walked blindly to her grave.

At the Hôtel du Prince he made inquiries as to the English consul. Did Bicherta possess such a functionary? Adolphe, the concierge, supplied the information.

"The English consul is Mr. Bonningtown. Number Seven Rue Massena. If he is sober, sir, he see you before lunch. I recommend you go before lunch, Mr. Bonningtown very thirsty gentleman."

Sir Roger Tancred called on Mr. Bonnington before luncheon on the following morning. He was intercepted

by a clerk, but he produced a card and a declaration that he must see Mr. Bonnington in person.

He saw Mr. Bonnington, a highly colored man in the fifties who wore whiskers and a frock coat, but Mr. Bonnington transcended his appearance. He was a gentleman, if a thirsty one.

"My name's Tancred."

"Delighted to meet you, sir. If I can be of any

—died in Bicherta some twenty years ago. I suppose you were not here at the time."

Mr. Bonnington seemed to perspire. "No; I was not here. But may I ask if you are a relation?"

"I said—my mother."

"I'm a little deaf, sir. Yes, records. I think I have some recollection. Please excuse me."

He got up. He routed in a bookcase, and to Tancred



what he had feared to find. There were two rapiers on the wall. The only woman he had ever cared for watched them.

—?" He was spacious and large in his movements; he had a shrewd blue eye. "I am wondering if you can give me any information. Imagine my visit is not quite conventional."

"So much the better, sir. Conspuez the conventions." "I suppose you keep records, or perhaps you could tell

Mr. Bonnington sat down suddenly, looking hot. "Par—sir; your name is Tancred?"

his activities were puzzling. His impression was that Mr. Bonnington was suffering discomfort. But why?

The consul was turning over the pages of a volume that looked like a daybook or diary. He asked a question. "Have you any information, sir?"

"With regard to my mother's death?"

"Precisely."

"None at all. I was a small child at the time, an only child. All that I know is that she died in France."

The consul gave him a queer, peering glance over his shoulder. "In France. But—?"

"I may as well tell you that I discovered her grave quite in the cemetery here."

to bet a thousand on her in New York. That I've thirty-one hundred on fifteen to one—and that's sixty-six thousand five hundred I win—an' on the money bet away from the track I get a forty-one hundred dollars back."

"You're worth over seventy-five thousand dollars, Tim—and you've earned every cent of it. I'll give you a check for it this evening. Confound the day I ever picked you up on the road! Your mare has just beaten me out of a five-thousand-dollar purse, not to mention a three-thousand-dollar bet at even money."

He sighed and a cryptic smile played around the corners of his mouth. "And I thought I knew the horse that was going to win this race. Well, I know a little more about horses now—and my education has cost me something."

He was thinking of Timothy J. Donovan's forty-one-hundred-dollar bet which he had "bucketed." He was glad he could afford to make good to Timothy J. "All my life," he reflected, "while Tim lives, I'll have a joke on myself and never be able to tell it to a soul."

An hour later, at the barn where Tanglefoot, cooled out now and blanketed, stood munching sweet California hay while Timothy J. leaned over the half-door of her box and beamed love upon her, Ben Toothaker came by and handed him a check for his winnings.

"Tell me, Tim," he begged, "how you knew the mare would win today."

"I didn't know. I only suspected she would, sor. I told ye she's afraid o' horses, did I not? When she's shtarted in close the sight o' the man wit' the red flag just inside the fence annoys her. There he shtands wit' his flag ripplin' in the breeze, an' ready to drop it the instant the barrier's sprung, an' it makes her nervous. She's into the shtarting gate an' out ag'in a dozen times, usin' up her energy an' bein' manhandled by the brutes of assistant shtarters."

"She's not calm an' set for a spring like an antelope, so the faster-breakin' horses get away first an' she's afraid to press on through any openin' that shows up. Nor will she do well if the boys thrives to take her around the field. Nor will she run well if another horse challenges her in the first three-eighths an' runs her neck an' neck. Back go her ears an' she quits."

"But why does she do that, Tim?"
"For two reasons. She's a mare—an' mares have niver the heart a colt or a gelding have. Thin she's got an old memory. Whin she was a two-year-old an' the fastest o' her year in America, her thin owners entered her in the Futurity at Saratoga, an' in the very shtart o' the race she got into a press o' horses an' fell. She took a complete somersault, an' the memory of it made her timid."

"But she wasn't timid today, Tim."
Timothy J. Donovan smiled. "There's nothin' in life more courageous nor a mother, sor—an', though ye do not know it, Tanglefoot's six weeks gone in foal. A bred mare's nerves are quieter; she runs shtraighter an' thruer an' honeste nor a maiden mare."

"But in back o' that ag'in, sor, she had the outside position, an' I give the assistant shtarter fifty dollars not to man-handle her, an' I give the man wit' the flag fifty more to shtand wit' his flame-anointed flag on his shoulder wit' the red cloth hangin' down his back so's the mare couldn't see it before the shtart."

"But the jock had his eye on the flag-man an' as the flag rose up hard an' vicious he knew it was goin' to fall—an' he beat the barrier by two lengths. She was off in front an' she opened up a big lead, crossed over an' wit' nothin' in

front o' her ran throe to her breedin'. So horse bumped her or bothered her—an' not till the last sixteenth did that jockey get up to challenge her."

"But her royal blood was up thin; she was winnin' an' she knew it an' she ran a fifty-thousand-dollar shtake horse to a dead finish. The rest ye know. An' she'll niver race ag'in, nor will I ever own another race horse. Me colors will hang in a glass case an' on top o' the case will shtand the silver cup she won this day. I'm contint."

"What are you going to do with all your money, Tim?"

"I've been a wild jackass all o' me days, sor, but this time it goes into bonds for me ould age. I've been shtandin' here thinkin' I might go back to Ireland an' live the life of a gentleman, wit' a little farm an' a few mares, but I'd a letter from me niece a while back an' sure, she tells me times are hard there."

"So I got thinkin' o' the yearlin's that must be broke next fall, an' the eight two-year-olds we'll take to Maryland next month, not to mention the foal Tanglefoot will bear us—an' please the Lord, it'll be a colt—an' ye the good kind boss but a babe in the horse chistnuts just the same, an' how could I have ye for the jackals to pick the bones o' ye..."

"Mr. Toothaker, sor, do ye mind that little mare, not a nerve in her atther that race, an' peckin' away at her supper for all the wurld as if she'd breezed instead o' breakin' a track record? She's a great little doer, so she is, an' whin I think that whin we met she was headed for the slaughterhouse whilst I was headed for the poorhouse..."

He wiped his sleeve across his old eyes. Verily, God had been good to him and his Tanglefoot.

Ghost in the Villa

(Continued from page 73)

read in his book. "Yes; her grave is in the cemetery. By the way, your father, Sir Richard Tancred—"

"My father was a peculiar and reticent man."

"Was that so? H'm, yes; your mother died in Bicherta, sir."

"Can you tell me where?"
The consul put his book away. "The Villa Veleda, Sir Roger."

"Wait. I'm curious about something. There is a strange, derelict old house among trees away up on the cliff."

Mr. Bonnington stared at him almost with fear in his eyes. "That—is the Villa Veleda, sir."

There was a pause, and then Mr. Bonnington sat down in his chair and assumed an air of stubborn sleepiness.

"Yes, a derelict house. It belongs now, I believe, to an eccentric old person—a misanthrope who is never seen."

"And his name?"

"Cassalis."

"What nationality?"
The consul shrugged. "Presumably French. That is all I can tell you."

"Would it be possible for me to visit the house?"

"Quite impossible, sir, I should say."

Tancred looked at him, was about to ask further questions but refrained. He rose. He appeared satisfied. "I'm very much obliged to you, Mr. Bonnington."

"Not at all, sir; not at all."

"There is a fee?"

"No, sir; no fee."

Tancred went out from Number Seven Rue Massena far more seriously puzzled than when he had entered it. What was the mystery? What had Mr. Bonnington

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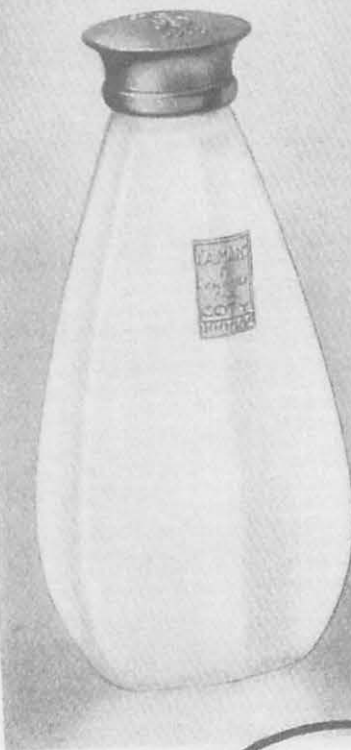
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SKIN IRRITATIONS

kept secret and smuggled in that book of his? His mother had died some twenty years before in that ghost of a house and had been buried in the cemetery of Bicherta—those were simple facts.

She could not have been very old at the time of her death. He had always had the impression that she had not been happy. But then, everything about his young days had been strange: his father's death by drowning in the Channel; the fact that he had never seen even a photograph of his mother; the austere reticence of old Aunt Marcia, who had taken charge of him and Thorn House, and who had died seven years ago.

The very cutter from which his father had fallen overboard still lay rotting in the Beaulieu River. The Osprey had been a famous boat in her day, an audacious craft handled by two men, Richard Tancred and old Tranter, his *fidus Achates*. She had sailed half round the world, a thing of adventure.

Yes, his father had been a man of many adventures, a nineteenth-century viking.

Tancred went back to the hotel with a sense of curiosity unappeased. That gray house tantalized him. It associated itself with all that was mysterious in the unknown history of his mother. Why had she died out here? How had she died, alone and in exile?

He was more than curious. It was as though fate had slipped into his hands a dark thread that had to be followed. He wanted to penetrate the secret of the Villa Veleda; to walk through its rooms, listen, and ask it questions. But what was there to be discovered in it after all these years?

The house was occupied by an oddity named Cassalis who had for a housekeeper a virago who tolerated no visitors. This house of mystery might have other mysteries.

He dined alone in his suite. The windows overlooked the sea, and the valet, impeccably French, had closed shutters and drawn curtains. Tancred lighted a cigar, and uncovered and opened one of the windows. He saw the moon shining on a tranquil sea, and the blackness of the rocks and the pallor of the sand.

He thought: "There are people in Bicherta who must have seen my mother. It might be easy to ask questions, but not to ask them of strangers. The consul was not inclined towards frankness."

Yes, obviously, Mr. Bonington had been eager to close that book, and though one would not have accused that hard-drinking gentleman of a sensitive reticence, Tancred could appreciate such an attitude. He was not going to ask questions about a woman who had enveloped herself in mystery. Mysteries were best left alone. They were not to be invoked and made to walk in public.

But standing at the window, he had his inspiration. The tide was low, and a broad fringe of sand was uncovered. He remembered the flight of steps leading down to the little cove. His urge was to visit the Villa Veleda by moonlight.

He had not dressed for dinner. He put on an overcoat and went out smoking his cigar as though for a stroll before turning in. He made his way to the beach, and walked along the sands left firm and smooth by the sea. The cliff went up like a black wall, and here and there an occasional rock slept like some ancient saurian.

Half a mile's walking brought him to one of the horns of the little bay, and scrambling over the rocks, he stood looking up. The stairway showed as a slanting streak on the face of the cliff.

Tancred climbed it. There was no

handrail; the narrow zigzag of the ascent had elements of danger, and some of the steps had crumbled. He went up slowly, keeping well in to the cliff face. It occurred to him that no one would climb these steps for pleasure, and that the Villa Veleda was not likely to be trespassed upon from the sea.

He came to the gate. It was of wood and let into an arched stone recess in the wall, and here he found himself balked. The gate fitted the arch, and the stonework made it unclimbable.

He examined the wall. It was eight feet high, and on the very edge of the rocky cliff. He was checked. And then it occurred to him to try the gate. He put a shoulder against it and pushed. It gave way before him, for the thing was rotten, a mere ghost of a gate left to impress any chance scrambler up those steps. It sagged inwards, giving him sufficient space through which to slip.

He found himself on the terrace. He stood and listened. Suppose they kept a dog and let him loose at night? He had no wish to be chased down those precipitous steps.

The night was very still, but the washing of the sea on the rocks below sent up a muffled murmur. Treading cautiously, he approached the loggia. A shaft of light was shining through a chink in the shutters of a lower window.

Tancred approached this window. The old and badly fitting shutters left a slit between them through which the ray of light escaped, and putting an eye to this slit, Tancred was able to command a small portion of the room. He could see a pair of legs; part of a chair; two hands holding a book.

A man was sitting in the chair, reading. Obviously, it must be Monsieur Cassalis, the eccentric occupant of the Villa Veleda. Tancred tried to see more of the mysterious figure, but without success.

It occurred to him that he might try to widen the slit by gently prizing the shutters apart, but such an attempt might betray his presence. And then, suddenly, the long legs made a movement. The book was lowered. Monsieur Cassalis had been leaning back in the chair. He sat up, and his head and shoulders came into Tancred's line of vision.

And Tancred stood and stared. His mouth fell open. The thing seemed monstrous, incredible, fantastic, for the man in the chair was his father, that Sir Richard Tancred who had disappeared from the Osprey eighteen years before.

Tancred did not know how long he stood there squinting through the slit between the shutters. Probably it was a matter of seconds. He was conscious of feeling cold; he was conscious of an overwhelming fear such as a child experiences in a dream. The thing was incredible yet true, and yet no ghost could have made him bristle as did the live shape of that old man with the white head and sharp, proud profile.

Tancred fled. Somehow he scrambled down those steps to the beach. He found himself running, breathing hard and fast.

"Good Lord, but it isn't possible!"

The lights of the hotel admonished him. He pulled himself together. He walked through the lounge with its bridge tables and its chatter. He climbed the stairs to his suite and locked the door; poured himself out a stiff whisky and sat down.

The reality remained with him. His father was alive, an old man buried in that ghost of a house on the edge of the

cliff, the house in which his father died.

Tancred passed a night of ordinary bewilderment and indecision, go away, or to stay? To leave Cassalis and his mystery together, derelict villa, or to go back to the truth? Surely, he had had some explanation. His own past world had become anomalous; he was neither Sir Roger nor the owner of the Tancred. Only a son who might expect the situation was fantastic.

It made him angry; roused gradual resentment. He decided those steps a second time and the mystery. It was inevitable.

But he had to wait for the before he could make his move. The day was as still as had been, the sea placid and even the sun was reassuringly climbed the steps he always whether he would find the victim of a hallucination was as he had left it. His not yet been discovered. He sat on the terrace.

A figure in a chair, a figure white yachting suit, seated. The figure turned its head toward him. The gray eyes wide hands clasped the arms of the chair. "The figure spoke, 'Roger then, found me out?'"

Some tense strand in Tancred loosened. Bareheaded, he saw that extraordinary ghost of a boy, inarticulate and so grace. "Are—you—really—?" The bushy eyebrows were suddenly alive to sit in the member. But how did he find those steps?

"Up those steps." The eyes gleamed. "Ah, fatal steps. But who told is no one living who could Tranter died."

"No one told me. That chance. I came here for happened—"

"You discovered something that—"

"A grave. I made inquiry that—"

His father raised a voice. Yes, she died here. But explain—"

"This house fascinated me. I felt it had a mystery."

"It had."

"Incredibly so. I climbed last night. I saw a crack through a crack between the shutters."

Old Tancred nodded. He saw a ghost—the most ghostly: a man who was dead and is alive. He smiled, and his smile was gentleness. "Yes, I apologize, Roger. And I had that you should never know—he looked at him."

"but now, something is wrong. I will be able to go away."

"Does one forget, sir?"

"Never! That is why will find a chair in the here into the sun."

"You will tell me, sir?"

"Yes, I will tell you."

He found the chair on the terrace and sat down. Old Tancred looked at the green-blue sea, might have gazed at it calling many wanderers.

"Your mother was Sir Roger. We did not know other. I was difficult. Our unhappiness began

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go away, or to stay? To leave Monsieur
Cassalis and his mystery together in that
derelict villa, or to go back and ask for
the truth? Surely, he had some right to
an explanation. His own position in the
world had become anomalous. Legally,
he was neither Sir Roger Tancred nor
the owner of the Tancred estates, but
only a son who might expect to inherit.
The situation was fantastic.

It made him angry; roused in him a
gradual resentment. He decided to climb
those steps a second time and confront
the mystery. It was inevitable.

But he had to wait for the tide to fall
before he could make his way into the
cove. The day was as still as the night
had been, the sea placid and faintly blue.
Even the sun was reassuring, and as he
climbed the steps he almost wondered
whether he would find that he had been
the victim of a hallucination. The gate
was as he had left it. His intrusion had
not yet been discovered. He found him-
self on the terrace.

A figure in a chair, a figure in an old
white yachting suit, seated in the sun!
The figure turned its head and observed
him. The gray eyes widened. The old
hands clasped the arms of the chair.

The figure spoke. "Roger! Has fate,
then, found me out?"

Some tense strand in Tancred seemed
loosed. Bareheaded, he stood in front
of that extraordinary ghost. He felt like
a boy, inarticulate and somehow in dis-
grace. "Are—you—really—alive, sir?"

The bushy eyebrows twitched. "Suffi-
ciently alive to sit in the sun and re-
member. But how did you come here?"

"Up those steps."
The eyes gleamed. "Ah, yes; up those
fatal steps. But who told you? There
is no one living who could have told you.
Tranter died."

"No one told me. The thing was
chance. I came here for my health. It
happened—"

"You discovered something?"

"A grave. I made inquiries. I found
that—"

His father raised a hand. "Wait.
Yes, she died here. But that does not
explain—"

"This house fascinated me, somehow.
I felt it had a mystery."

"It had."

"Incredibly so. I climbed those steps
last night. I saw a light. I looked
through a crack between the shutters."

Old Tancred nodded his head. "You
saw a ghost—the most monstrous of
ghosts: a man who should have been
dead and is alive. I apologize." He
smiled, and his smile had a whimsical
gentleness. "Yes, I apologize. It shocked
you, Roger. And I had taken such care
that you should never be shocked. But
now—he looked at his son intently—
"but now, something is due to you. You
will be able to go away and forget."

"Does one forget, sir?"

"Never! That is why I am here. You
will find a chair in the loggia. Carry it
here into the sun."

"You will tell me, sir?"

"Yes, I will tell you."

He found the chair and carried it to
the terrace and sat down beside his
father. Old Tancred looked for a while
at the green-blue sea, much as Ulysses
might have gazed at it, an old man re-
calling many wanderings.

"Your mother was younger than I was,
Roger. We did not understand each
other. I was difficult; she—impatient.
... became so serious that

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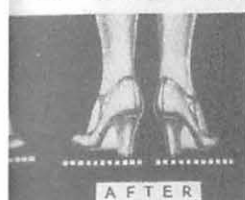
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I let her travel. I was excessively fond of her; she was the only woman I have ever cared for, in a way that matters. Eventually I bought this villa for her. I hoped that we might come together again here, not only for our own sakes but for yours.

"It was not to be. She found a lover, and it came to my ears that she had a lover. I was a passionate man in those days. I took old Tranter and the Osprey, and we sailed for this coast. We lay out to sea until it was dark, and then worked in. The Osprey carried a small collapsible boat. I came ashore in her, beached her in the cove, climbed those steps, and found what I had feared to find." He paused.

"He was a young Spaniard. I found them together in that room in which you saw me sitting. There were two old rapiers on the wall. I took one and gave him the other. I was an expert with the foils in those days, and he was a worthy opponent. But I had murder in me. Your mother stood and watched us. Well, I killed him."

He nodded his head at the sea. "I was a little mad. I pointed my sword at your mother. I think it was in my mind to utter those bitter words. But they were never uttered. She was too desperately and tragically quick. She threw herself on the point of my sword. That was the climax."

"I was shocked beyond belief. My nerve seemed to fail me. I left those two lying there. I fled. I sculled back to the cutter, and we made for the open sea. No one had seen us. Tranter would have eaten my boots if I had ordered him to. I told him everything. He kept his mouth shut. Those two deaths in the villa remained a mystery."

"But was that the end? Hardly. Never was there a more miserable or a more haunted man than I was. I had no peace. Also, there was a boy—you. At last—a kind of inspiration came to me. I put to sea with Tranter. I told him exactly what I meant to do. I took money, a wad of cash in French notes.

I landed here at night, two years after the tragedy. I had grown a beard. Tranter took the Osprey home single-handed, and told the tale as I had ordered him to tell it. I had fallen overboard at night somewhere off the Lizard."

Old Tancred looked at his son. "Expiation? Well, in a sense—yes. I took the wildest of chances, and chance was kind to me. In those days no one worried about passports. I spoke French pretty well. Not a soul in Bicherta knew me as Richard Tancred. I bought this villa cheaply from my own executors; it had stood empty since the tragedy. I have lived like a monk on the money I brought with me. Yes, nearly eighteen years of solitude and self-chastening. Only twice have I been to her grave. I sit here and look at the sea and wait."

He smiled. "For there may be other judgments, other expiations, purgings of the proud flesh. A man can do no more than humble himself to himself. And it may seem strange to you, Roger, but I have found peace here. If the spirit of a woman ever returns to some sad haunt, her spirit has returned and forgiven me."

For a while there was silence between them. Old Tancred put out a hand, and his son's welcomed it.

"There is no more to be said. You can go to the authorities if you wish and tell them who I am. No? You will leave the Villa Veleda to its ghost?"

Tancred nodded. "Isn't that inevitable? What right have I to interfere? I shall go away as though—" He winced. "Yes, and that going-away will be final. Father, if this secret has to be kept, is there nothing I can do?"

"Nothing, Roger. You have met and spoken to a ghost. Though perhaps your memory of me may be more merciful. The man of violence is very old and at peace."

They parted there on the terrace, and Tancred passed down those fatal steps. He left Bicherta next day for Italy, but before he left he laid flowers on the grave of his mother.

The Fun of Being a Fool (Continued from page 59)

instead of hanging round Marseille which I know inside out anyway. There was a friend with me. We pooled our resources, the return fare to Algiers being the only real expense; and if you like the sea and don't much care how you travel, even that wasn't a killing sum.

A scrupulously clean room down near the water front cost a few Algerian francs a day. Food we got where and how we could. A couple of times we dined in style and on the fat of the land—there was an American training ship in, and weren't its cadets and officers ecstatic at running into a couple of compatriots in that unlikely spot!

We walked, I should imagine, close on a hundred miles, seeing all we could! And we patronized street cars, begged rides on French army camions, and were invited to share other people's sight-seeing tours de luxe. The native quarters of a couple of towns we saw "on our own" with great thoroughness, and that, too, was how we got into the Women's Mosque of Algiers.

One of the innumerable times I went around Europe, I did it on a month's savings, with no job to return to and no backing to help me out of any difficulties I might get into. I traveled third, and when it was possible, fourth class. Made a variety of richly amusing acquaintances, and got a satisfaction out of the

days when, with a vigilant family in attendance, I traveled train de luxe; or in the days when, as a newspaper special correspondent, I knew that wherever I might happen to be, in any quarter of the globe, I could cash checks at any moment for almost any amount I cared to name.

The only use of money is to purchase freedom (because without it, of course, freedom doesn't exist). But freedom is precisely what most people sell in order to get it. What a travesty! Really, I think money is a delusion.

For many years I knew the security a settled income gives. When I was quite old enough to know what I was doing, I gave that income away of my own free will, to someone who was dependent on me. Dependence is a thing I could not stomach for myself; how could I inflict it on anyone else?

That income had always stood like a bulwark between me and the world; if you like, between me and the consequences of my own folly. But from the moment of parting with it to the moment when I arrived back in New York a few days ago with twenty-five dollars in my pocket, I have never regretted parting with it.

More, I have made a discovery. Those on one side of the property line and those on the other (the people, that is,

people to whom it is only a word speak the same language. Their wants are different. They even understand one another think they do. But you have to Rubicon from Everything to find that out.

Recklessness in choosing friends is a great investment. For friendships are always the most—with the most unlikely people.

I've reveled in contact, delightful, with American and Spanish detectives. A innkeeper, and an old French thought ships, like people, should be tinkered with, but "allow the way they came into the world at least one escaped convict, great charm, whose subsequent have followed with unflinching in the newspapers. But I have or never enjoyed myself so much the people I was "sure to be fully hand-picked for the party invited to a select dinner party. What-Have-You.

Among people all cut to your tern, what chance is there startling contrasts that bring mind by inches and strike at the dullest personalities?

I suppose I should have a lessness in choosing acquaintances, though, up above there, for being who can count on even in the real sense is fortunate ship at its best is the biggest enduring of human relations one doesn't discover that till lived some time.

I didn't until I had been in share of the beautiful and the affairs which, though it may, tically unfashionable to admit and fade again for all of us, ture and change.

Like everyone else, I lost my young faith and idealism in now all is said and done, a small return. But friendship there is the "mattering" that out it, no human relationship to anything or ought to endure the rock on which marriage me—the marriage that half regard as my crowning piece because I contracted it, and half regard as my crowning folly because I ended it!

I cannot find it in my heart with either of them, nor to wait the years during which it prospered. I have simply chalked more failure to my account account, mind; nobody else's—out of that pen of femininity called Marriage, back into the that always belongs to the Love failed me. But there Freedom, and the Danger Friendship.

One friendship that has sur times and bad faced together; scenes and misunderstandings impossible demands and inevitable appointments... I hope it the acid test, always.

My code is not, of course, could be recommended freely. Few men and fewer women to meet its peculiar demands, have the desire, but not the adventure—for living out on things. Pretense won't help. You need a waterproof philosophy upper lip, and the courage your mistakes without making ther one of regretting them.

But for those who can stand

17

SHORT STORY.

Woman's Natural Vanity

By Warwick Deeping

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People said Isabelle Lambert was a peculiar young woman. She did not behave in the obvious and expected fashion, and therefore the obvious people catalogued her as an enigma.

Two men were in a great hurry to marry her, and she had refused them with a consistency that had irritated the sentimentalists of Sandover. Her obstinacy must have boasted some esoteric charm, for these two young men pursued her regularly when they came on leave, persuaded her to play golf or tennis, tried to tempt her to lunch with them in town and were never quite convinced by her inability to surrender.

They were young men who thought very well of themselves. They knew exactly how you should dress, what you should drink, where you should go. They had no humility. Captain Roy Tankerville owned Tankerville Court, had posed as an orator and an intellectual at Oxford, and saw political triumphs placarded across the dawn of the future. Lieutenant Jack Patterson made his money stockbroking with his father in town; he was a crack polo player; a bland, big, trustful young man who from the age of seven had been in the habit of ordering other people about.

It was in the month of June, in the year of the Great Peace that Lady Tankerville gave her first tennis party, and among those who crowded to the sleek and cedar-shaded serenity of the court came Mr. Richard Lancaster, in age about five-and-forty, ex-sergeant-major of a labour battalion in France.

"Quite a nice person," Lady Tankerville explained. "We called on him the other day. As Roy says, my dear, we must be prepared to be a little more democratic in these days."

It was the rector's wife who introduced Lancaster to Isabelle Lambert. She found him standing isolated in the Dutch garden. She thought him an awkward delfict, and being fassily sympathetic she took him in tow.

"Quite lovely here, is it not? But I must really find you something more interesting than goldfish, Mr. Lancaster."

He was a quiet, bronzed man, with blue eyes that had a peculiar smiling softness. He was generally dressed in rough tweeds and wore a Burberry hat. He stood solidly on his feet and never fidgeted.

"Goldfish are quite interesting," he said to her.

"How nice to be able to feel like that."

He smiled. "They react," he added, "everything that is alive reacts." But the rector's wife idid not quite understand him.

She took him on to the lawns, into a mass of cedar shadows and tea tables, and millinery, and introduced him to Isabelle Lambert—Isabelle with her rippling brown hair, her little streak of sensitive red for a mouth, her enigmatic dark eyes and her self-willed chin.

"Mr. Lancaster, Miss Lambert, I think you were in the army, Mr. Lancaster?"

"Mr. Lancaster, Miss Lambert, I think you were in the army, Mr. Lancaster?"

"Yes."

"And the courtesy title should be Colonel Lancaster, perhaps?"

"No—sergeant-major," he said quite frankly, not in the least troubled.

Isabelle Lambert glanced at him with the interested eyes of an observant young woman who had discovered unexpected originality.

"Didn't we meet somewhere the other day?"

He smiled at her.

"We did. I was giving my dogs a run in the Warren."

She smiled in return, remembering him as a man romping with a couple of puppies and throwing fir cones for them to catch.

"I'm rather fond of dogs," she said vaguely.

"And gardens?"

"What do you mean by a garden?"

"You have a fine example of a class of garden here."

"You like it?"

"No: it's too big," he said tersely, "and it has to have its hair brushed too often."

She sat considering that judgment of his, and that little red mouth of hers flickered on the edge of a smile.

"Two acres of grass to mow, and six men fussing all day. Have you seen the wild garden at the cottage?"

"No."

"I would show it you, only—"

"What is the difficulty?"

She laughed.

"It's quite absurd, but I have a nail sticking up in my shoe."

"A nail is a very serious reality."

"It asserted itself when I walked up here. I shall be very severe with the shoemaker."

"If I could borrow your shoe for a few minutes, you would be able to show me that wild garden."

"You mean, you could get rid of the nail?"

"Of course."

"You wouldn't mind?"

"What is there to mind?"

Deliberately and with an air of amused serenity she unlaced the grey suede shoe and surrendered it to him, and he walked off in the direction of the stables, carrying the shoe in one hand.

Irene Tankerville strolled over to Isabelle's chair. She was a superior little person of sixteen.

"Who in the funny old buffer, Isabelle?"

"Which buffer?"

"The person who is going to play the amateur colbder or something."

"You mean Mr. Lancaster. He does not strike me as being old."

"Oh, my dear! He's a stuff-jacket, and the old thing has been a sergeant-major. Doesn't he look like it? And how quaint and bourgeois, walking off with that shoe."

Isabelle yawned.

"I can't picture Roy doing it."

"Roy? Roy might have sent the car down to the village with the shoe occupying the back seats."

"I rather think that Roy's intellect would never let itself be conscious of nails in other people's shoes."

Lancaster returned at the end of ten minutes.

"Settled it," he said placidly.

She stretched out her foot, and he slipped on the shoe and laced it, tying the bow twice.

"That all right?"

"Perfect. But how did you manage

"That all right?"
"Perfect. But how did you manage it?"

"There is a garage here, and most respectable garages have an anvil or two, or a steel vice. Now what about that wild garden?"

She stood up.

"I will show you."

Observant people may have noticed that Isabelle and Lancaster were away for the best part of an hour. They came strolling back with every appearance of being interested in each other. The butler was telling her a tale or describing some quaint incident in France, and her dark eyes were full of laughter. He was able to unlike her youth.

"How sweet. And what happened to Private Tonks?"

"I'm afraid I had to simulate blindness when I visited Tonks's billet. He was what we call—"

"Merry."

"Yes, merry, to put it delicately."

"And the great sergeant-major compounded a felony?"

He smiled down at her.

"The art of living is not to fuss, you know. It's a very human world, the army. And I was fond of the men. I think we were the best labour battalion in France."

She diverged so that they skirted the crowd on the lawn, and arrived at a little table and a couple of chairs set under one of the cedars.

"We are in time for tea."

"What may I get you?"

"Tea, please, and anything in the way of cakes."

He performed his part without any hurry, and she gathered up the conversation from the point where she had left it.

"Why didn't you take a commission?"

"Too old, so they said. Still, I had nine months in the trenches as a Tommy."

"You had?"

"Yes. Got hit in the leg, and they sent me home for a while. Then I was offered this job, and I like it. The money did not matter to me, and, after all, Miss Lambert, a sergeant-major can be rather useful."

She reflected a moment.

"I have an idea," she said, "that you were the real C.O. of the battalion."

"Nothing of the kind. I just got things done."

Isabelle left Tankerville Court with the main incidents of Lancaster's life sketched for her in simple outlines. He was a Cambridge man, and had spent most of his life in the east. He had planted and adventured in rubber. His wife had been dead ten years. He was forty-six years old, and had an income of a thousand a year. His simplicity and frankness had surprised her. Intuitions and egotistical subtleties seemed to annoy him. She found herself saying "What a boy," and wondering how he had managed it.

They had arranged to play golf together on the local links on the following Friday.

"You'll beat me," he told her.

She wondered if he would be annoyed if she did.

Then Roy Tankerville arrived, demobilised, and three days in advance of Jack Patterson, who had been held up for a month by his brigadier.

Tankerville strolled into Whitelands about eleven o'clock on the Thursday

Tankerville strolled into Whitelands about eleven o'clock on the Thursday morning. He was in mufti, a creature of great elegance and distinction. Lady Tankerville was very proud of her son. He was so complete, so witty, so superlatively "it." Roy Tankerville had a future.

"Hallo, Isabelle, serene as ever, what?"
He glanced at himself in a mirror, sat down, gave a twitch to each trouser leg, and surveyed her through his monocle. He was a dark and sallow young man, with hair as smooth as ebony and eyes that never brightened.

"So you are home for good, Roy. What a responsibility for us."

"That's rather cryptic. We shall have to put you up against Sidney Webb, and Chiozza Money, and all those sweet Fabians."

"So you are for politics. And how many gardeners are you going to keep?"

He lit a cigarette and did not ask her if she minded.

"Another cryptic remark! The court always needed seven, the proper biblical number, you know. I'm going to enlarge *thence there a bit*."

"How nice! The court is a bit poky, isn't it? You do want two or three more big rooms."

He blew smoke rings and expanded, and Isabelle listened to him with suave attention. There was no doubt that Roy was a man with ideas, ideas that were imperial and autocratic. He grew quite warm about them, flooding all the future with visions of a fine male egotism.

"We have grown rather big out there," he explained, "and a man has learnt to think in army corps. There is something in the superman idea."

Isabelle supposed there was.

And then he asked her to play golf.

"What about to-morrow?"

"I'm booked."

"Saturday?"

"If you like I shall beat you, you know."

He was faintly annoyed.

"I bet you won't."

Her match with Lancaster proved a very happy affair. She was rather a brilliant player, and his steadiness could not save him from defeat, yet she found him more of a sympathetic spectator than a rival. He teased her and laughed at himself, was never grossly obtrusive in his male courtesies, and yet somehow he made her feel that he was a good comrade ready at her elbow.

He admired her play, and he began to admire something more than her play. Being a woman she sensed that very quickly.

"By Jove, that's a fine drive! You are only ten yards from the green."

"Great shot. Your wrist work is fine, Miss Lambert."

He enjoyed her brilliancies, and enjoyed them so much that she found he had a delightful and stimulating effect on her. Those rofly humorous blue eyes of his were so very shrewd and understanding. He was a little grizzled, but his brown face was clean cut, wholesome and virile, and his figure was that of a young man.

"Well, that's a good honest thrashing, anyway. I hope you will let me give you some tea."

They were strolling up from the last green to the little brown and white clubhouse, and she saw Roy Tankerville standing on the terrace.

"Thanks. I should love some."

"You are just a little tired."

"Perhaps, just a little."

"You are not the stolid type, Miss Lambert. A brilliant hour's work and

"seemed quite keen on those schemes of mine."

Mr. Lancaster and Isabelle played a round of golf next day, and played themselves into the world of the great mystery: Blue sky, green turf, June woods, a girl and a man. A sudden shy and half playful intimacy characterized the prelude. When he had to scoop for that ball of hers in the pond, she held his hand to steady him, and the grip of her young fingers spell comradeship. The game was a mere accompaniment to the things they had to talk about. They even forgot at times how many strokes they had played, and argued over them like a girl and boy. It was doubtful indeed, who won the game, though Isabelle insisted that Lancaster was three up.

"We shall have to be very serious tomorrow," she told him. "Jack Patterson is a wizen. We have got to beat them."

"I think we can do it, queen."

The rivals were watching the affair from the terrace. They had been out on a practice round, and had disliked each other more than usual.

"Who is the old blighter in the rye-hags?"

"That's Lancaster."

Jack Patterson stared at them.

"What's the game? Tanks? What's Isabelle's little wheeze?"

Tankerville sneered at him.

"Provocation, you ass. That and the natural vanity of a woman."

The foursome proved to be the most subtle and delicious affair that had ever been played on the links of Sandover. Tankerville and Patterson came on the ground like young supermen, serene and patronizing, ready to shine against and with each other. They treated Lancaster as a mere necessary, a sort of dummy at bridge.

"Well give you a stroke a hole."

"No, thank you. We play level."

The fifth hole found Tankerville and Patterson combining very badly. Isabelle was in a brilliant mood, and Lancaster missed nothing. He had holed two impossible putts, and the young men were down.

"Dash that old blighter! He has the devil's own luck."

"Well, if you hadn't messed that drive of yours—"

"I say that's good. Who put me in the bunker at the third?"

They began to clasp each other and to wrangle, and neither of them shone. Their temperaments clashed from the outset. It was a bad day.

"Oh, rotten shot!"

"Well, you put me in the rough, didn't you?"

They were five down at the turn, and it was on the homeward journey that they became subtly conscious of the fact that Isabelle and Lancaster were combining rather successfully in a game that was greater than golf. They kept together with an air of liking it, and Roy Tankerville suspected them of exchanging amused glances.

"I say, Jack."

"Hallo."

"That old blighter is beastly pleased with himself."

"Provocation, what! Confound it, I wish you wouldn't chatter!"

They lost the match by five to four, and Lancaster asked them to tea. They accepted, being in a fighting mood and of the opinion that this edgier was due to be squeezed out. Youth would not be denied.

At the sheltered end of the terrace the fat and efficient steward was hovering protectingly about a particular table that had been laid for tea. He studied

protectingly about a particular table that had been laid for tea. He smiled amiably at Lancaster, associating him with the pleasant crispness of a new five-round note.

"Your table, sir, for four, sir."

Patterson glomped down in what appeared to be the most comfortable chair.

Lancaster corrected him.

"Sorry, but that is Miss Lambert's particular chair."

Patterson got up as though someone had kicked him.

"Oh, is it?"

His retreat showed two pink silk cushions looking rather depressed and flattened.

"Ah, no cushions!"

She had flushed slightly, and flashed a look at Lancaster, one powerless and significant gleam of the eyes.

"There's a riddle for you two supermen. How many cushions do I like to lay chair?"

"Oh, twenty, perhaps," said Patterson quickly.

She turned laughingly to Tankerville.

"What about your Biblical number, Roy, the eternal seven?"

Roy looked annoyed.

The fat steward brought the teapot, and Isabelle discovered a crack in the china on the tray.

"Tens!"

There were three white cups and saucers of the ordinary club pattern, and standing a little apart from them an exquisite little Rose Doherty cup with the light shining through it like sun light through a shell.

"Lovely."

"Yes, miss."

"Why this cup?"

"It's your special cup, miss. I had instructions."

She gave Lancaster another of those quick, soft glances.

"How much sugar do you take, Roy?"

"Three."

"And Jack?"

"I don't take the stuff."

"Sorry. I had quite forgotten."

The lurking humour of the tea party did no more than render the supermen vaguely uncomfortable. Isabelle gave them no openings. She persisted in making Lancaster talk about the gorgeous East, and as neither Tankerville nor Patterson knew anything of China or the Malay States, they remained most ingloriously mute. Patterson made one or two muscular attempts to heave the dominant topic over the fence, but Isabelle's enthusiasm for the orient frustrated him.

She refused one of Tankerville's extra

save cigarettes.

"May I have one of your Virginias, Dick?"

Lancaster blushed like a boy, and handed her his case.

"Would you care for another nine holes, presently?"

"You promised to give me a lesson on your car."

"So I did. Well?"

"I would rather have the lesson."

They detached themselves with a laughing word or two of ironical sympathy for the supermen on their defeat, and strolled off into the June sunlight.

Patterson stared after them.

"Well, I'm bothered!" he said. "I think it's we who should give Isabelle a lesson."

Tankerville snickered. He was not quite so obtuse as the stockbroker.

"You've had it, you idiot. And so have I."

"Had what?"

Roy looked at him with evil amusement. "There might be some consolation

Boy looked at him with evil assessment. There might be some consolation in despising this blond fool.

"Find out."

Within a week Jack Patterson knew

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The Green Caravan

by

WARWICK DEEPING

ALAN LIVESAY wanted to die. For death would mean forgetfulness and the end of his heart's pain.

He stood at his orchard gate, leaning his crossed arms on it, and his eyes were afraid. Behind him the fruit trees raised their aisled shadows over the sun-dappled turf, and beyond the orchard rose the chimneys and gable-ends of Livesay's house. There were two people in Livesay's garden, and, as he stood there leaning on the gate, he could hear their voices and little tremors of occasional laughter. The youth in these two voices wounded him. Twice he had strolled across the orchard to enter his own garden, and each time he had returned to the gate, defeat in the droop of his shoulders, his pleasant, kindly face clouded with gloom.

He had heard the young man's voice rallying the girl.

"Where's old Uncle Alan? Gone fishing?"

His wife's voice had replied from the hammock slung under the two lime trees.

"Oh, I dare say. He went out after tea."

Livesay leaned heavily on the gate.

"Yes; I'm too old," he reflected. "I ought to have known. And yet—my word—I care so frightfully."

The voices tortured him, especially the confident voice of young Lambert chattering to Grace Livesay as youth prattles to youth. They were cousins; and this young pup had shown up Livesay's grey hairs.

Livesay pulled a little mirror from his pocket and, taking off his hat, examined his reflection in the glass. He observed the rather bushy eyebrows above the blue eyes, the faint patch of brownish hair on each cheek, the lines about the eyes and mouth, the slight coarsening of the fresh skin. Five and forty! And yet he felt young. That was the tragic part of it. He had fallen in love with a girl of twenty and had

married her. His love had all the tragic tenderness of a love that is always a little afraid of losing the thing it cherishes.

"You fool!" he said to the face of the man in the mirror.

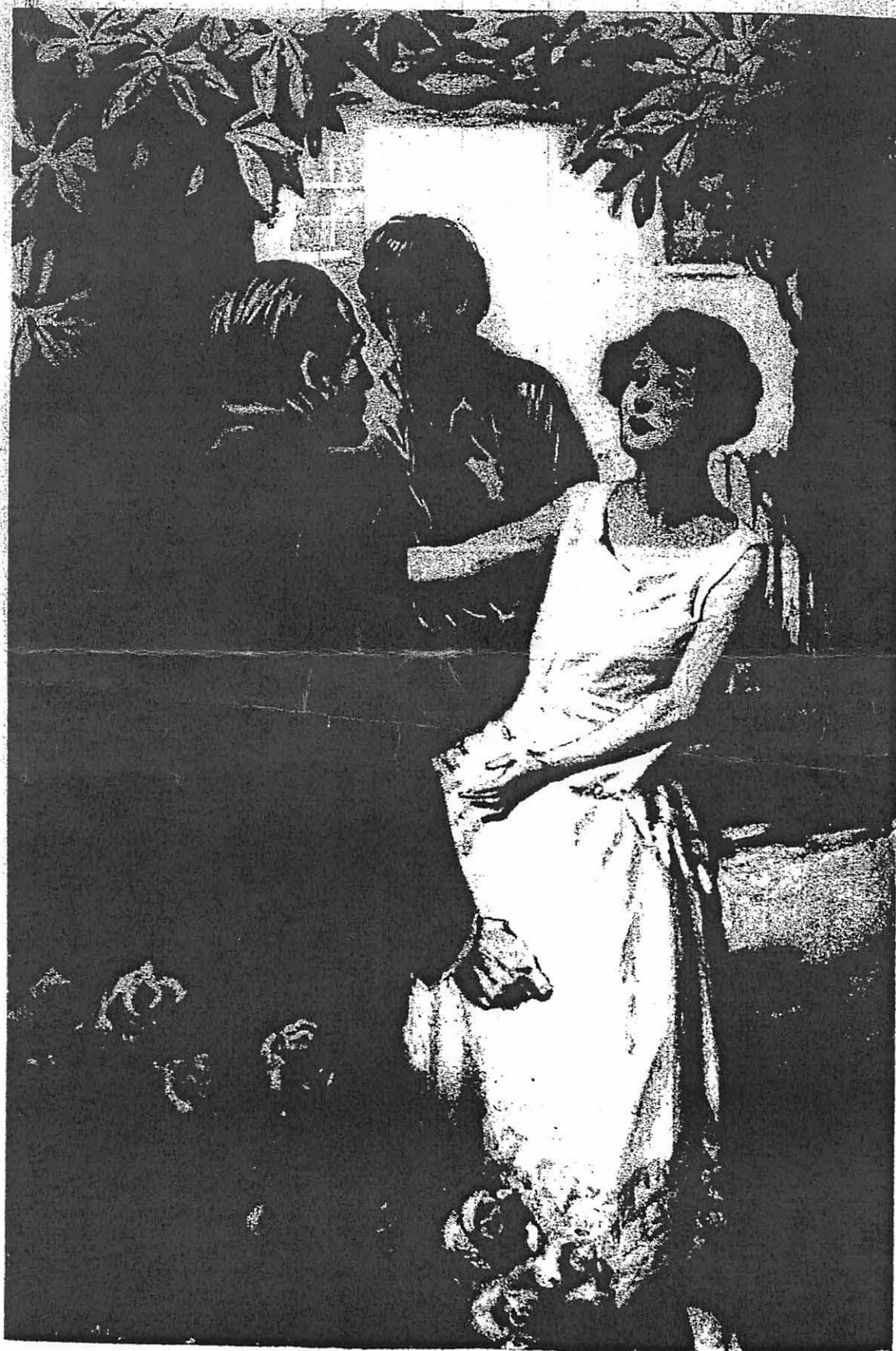
He stuffed the thing back into his pocket, put on his hat, picked up his ash stick, and, climbing over the gate into the lane, began to walk as though he wanted to outpace his own shadow.

The caravaner was cooking his supper. Behind him the green caravan stood on the verge of the wood where the purple of the heath met the great glooms of the pines, and between the caravan's camping-ground and the heathland road a belt of bracken caught the goblin gold in the evening sunlight. On the door of the caravan someone had painted the device of a human heart transfixed by an arrow of gold.

The caravaner sat watching a frying-pan perched on a tripod above the wood fire. He occupied an old oak-joint stool salvaged from some Sussex cottage. He was very tall, with a massive, ruddy, mischievously solemn face, and tawny hair turning grey and growing like the mane of a lion. He looked very strong. There was a kind of glow upon him. He wore a pair of old cord riding breeches and green stockings, and a cream-coloured taffeta shirt open at the throat.

The caravaner had succeeded in transferring his omelette from the frying-pan to an old willow-pattern plate, when he became aware of a man coming up the heath road out of the valley where Lemstock lay. The caravaner paused and observed him, for to the man of the green van all roads were live threads in the tapestry of nature's colour-weaving. The roads had brought to the caravaner most of his adventures, and his adventures had been many.

Livesay was still trying to walk away from his own shadow when he came under the scrutiny of the caravaner's wise and laugh-



"Her hands went out; her face was aglow.
 'Oh, Alan, how splendid of you!'"—p. 963

Drawn by
 C. P. Sallton

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THE QUIVER

ing eyes, and these eyes observed him as a doctor's eyes observe the sick. Livesay did not see the caravan under the shelter of the pines, nor the lion-headed man with his blue plate upon his knees, for his gaze was turned inwards.

"Excuse me, do you happen to have any matches on you?"

Livesay pulled up like a sleep-walker jerked into consciousness. He turned a startled face to the man on the stool, and stood quite still in the middle of the road.

"Matches?"

"Silly of me, but I forgot them when I was in Lemstock this afternoon."

Livesay's face expressed bewilderment. He patted his pockets, changing his stick from hand to hand. There was something fumbling and unimpressive about him. As the caravaner expressed it to himself: "Here is a fellow who has lost the starch out of the shirt of his soul."

"Sorry. Wait a bit. Sure I have a box somewhere."

He found it, and began to wander up through the bracken, while the caravaner rose with his plate in one hand, and came two or three steps to meet him.

"Thanks. It is very good of you. May I keep half the box?"

His voice was rich and satisfying, a sympathetic voice. It had the warmth of the sunlight in it, and flickers of roguish and elusive humour.

"Keep the whole box."

"That's generous. I will—on the condition that you cast anchor for ten minutes and smoke half a pipe of my tobacco."

Livesay's eyelids flickered. He had come out alone with his tragedy, and he resented the idea of cheerfulness as a sick man resents healthy noise.

"It is rather late."

A whimsical look came into the caravaner's eyes.

"And yet—you are walking away from your dinner. I think you dine at eight. It is now seven."

"How do you know?"

"Inference. Come and sit down, my dear chap. Twenty minutes at the pace you were going will take you back into Lemstock. Bath, five minutes; dressing, ten minutes. That leaves twenty-five minutes. Time for half a pipe."

Livesay hesitated. This big person seemed familiar to the point of impertinence, and yet when he looked into the caravaner's eyes he had a feeling that what

he had called impertinence was nothing but a very vital frankness.

"Yes; I dine at eight."

He moved through the bracken, looked about him vaguely, and sat down.

"Don't let me stop your meal."

"You won't."

Still holding the blue plate the caravaner resumed his place on the stool. There was a deliberation in his movements that impressed itself upon Livesay. The caravaner had dignity, extraordinary dignity, in spite of his abruptness and his queer clothes. A big hand went into his breeches pocket, produced a tobacco pouch, and tossed it to the provider of matches.

"Navy cut. Smoke it?"

"Yes."

"My name is Fothergill; Ignatius Brownsword Fothergill, thanks to my parents."

The name roused some association in Alan Livesay's brain. Fothergill! Ignatius Brownsword Fothergill! Where had he heard it before? His slow and rather clumsy hands were busy with tobacco pouch and pipe, and as he rolled the navy cut he remembered that he had seen the name on a book that his library had sent him some months ago. He had read the book. It had put forward a new exposition of the Subconscious, and it had impressed Livesay, though parts of it had left him treading deep water.

He glanced at the caravaner.

"Not Professor Fothergill, by any chance?"

"I am a professor, whatever that may mean."

"Of psychology?"

Fothergill shook his lion's mane.

"Life. That's the only thing that is worth while. Why bother about the labels?"

Livesay was one of those shy men who had spent his life with his garden, his farms, and his dogs. Never in all his days had he had to deal with a professor. He had visualized professors as either rather stupendous or rather ridiculous creatures, and not quite human. Glancing at the green caravan, he noticed the red heart transfixed by the arrow of gold, and was puzzled by it.

"You take your holiday this way, I suppose?"

Professor Fothergill had finished his omelette, and was helping himself to bread and honey.

"No, I work this way."

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THE GREEN CARAVAN

"You are not disturbed?"

"That is the very thing I ask for—to be disturbed. If you are out after life, Mr. Livesay, you don't sit in an arm-chair."

Livesay eyed him over the bowl of his pipe. The caravaner had got his name, though he could not remember having divulged it.

"I suppose that's so. But, books——"

"Go and look in my travelling den."

Livesay arose and did so. He was curious; he found himself being most extraordinarily impressed by Professor Fothergill, without being able to explain why. The man was like a big yellow sun radiating vitality. The interior of the caravan was equally surprising by reason of its completeness; it boasted a tiny kitchen, and a minute sitting-room and bedroom. The sitting-room had a writing-table and an easy-chair, and was lined with books, and Livesay noticed that most of the books were novels.

He came back with an air of puzzlement.

"Very compact—and comfortable. But I did not know——"

"That professors read novels."

"Yes."

"I do. What about Conrad? You get life there. Life, not dust."

Livesay had not read Conrad.

"But do you do your own work?"

"Of course. That's life—too. The more you do—the more you understand."

Livesay appeared to meditate. Some of the gloom and the bafflement had passed from his fresh and pleasant face, but as he pulled out his watch the shadow of tragedy returned.

He got up.

"I must be moving. I suppose, professor, you never pay calls?"

"Thousands of them."

Livesay's eyes looked at him with sudden vague appeal.

"I am sure—my wife and I——"

"Delighted."

"To-morrow. Would you come to tea?"

"With pleasure."

They parted, and the caravaner watched Livesay disappear down the road to Lemstock, and in his eyes there was the light of a human and pitying wisdom.

"That man wants to die. Why? I must find that out."

Alan Livesay expected Professor Fothergill to arrive about four o'clock, but the caravaner entered the gate of Cherry Hall about half-past three, for he had made the

discovery that you sometimes learnt a great deal about people by surprising them. As a matter of fact he did surprise two young people: a girl in a hammock, and a young man in a deck-chair. The young man was a gunnery-lieutenant in the Navy, and he was practising his craft by tossing cherries into the girl's lap. The girl had a book and was trying to read, and was denying her dark eyes to the man in the chair. It all seemed very harmless; but, to the professor, it was not so harmless, because the girl was Livesay's wife.

He introduced himself.

"My name is Fothergill. I am afraid I am very early."

Grace Livesay had swung herself out of the hammock. She had dark eyes and hair, and an air of eager seriousness. She was very young and very enthusiastic, a girl who must have her hero. She looked at the caravaner in his white flannel suit, with his fine head and his lion's hair, and the child in her rushed to him.

"I am so glad. I have read your books. It's really a great honour. This is my cousin, Hector Lambert. I'm afraid my husband is out somewhere."

Fothergill had the manners of a great gentleman. He smiled over her, and then he turned his smile on young Lambert, and discovered in that young gentleman a quite irreverent attitude of mind. Lieutenant Lambert had flat and staring eyes, and an air of being very much on the "bridge," complacently studying this queer jossier in the flannel suit.

Fothergill's smile continued.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Lambert."

Mr. Lambert said nothing. He kept his head in the air, showed his teeth for a moment, and producing a cigarette case, flicked it at Professor Fothergill.

"Gaspers—you know."

"Thanks," said the professor; "I adore gaspers. They make me feel nineteen. I am much obliged to you."

There was a pause. Mrs. Livesay returned to the hammock, and the caravaner sat down calmly in the lieutenant's chair. The best way to deal with a cub was to exclude him, especially when you knew that he was standing there getting ready to quiz you. The professor talked, and when he talked there were very few men who could take the wind from him, much less a little poop of a sailor-boy who patronized Livesay and made love to Livesay's wife. Within three minutes the caravaner had

THE QUIVER

Mrs. Livesay's dark eyes fixed on him like the eyes of an enthralled child, and Master Hector, vaguely piqued, strolled off in search of another chair.

So it went on till Livesay arrived.

"I'm awfully sorry, Fothergill. I must apologize——"

"My dear sir, I was too early. And I have nothing to complain of."

The three of them were standing, but Lambert was still lounging in his chair. Livesay glanced at him, and Professor Fothergill observed that glance, and saw in it fear and hatred. Complacent, cocksure youth had edged this rather shy man off the stage of his own home.

"Shall we have tea out here, Grace?"

"Why not?"

"Splendid idea," said the caravaner.

"We want another chair."

"Yes, we want another chair;" and Fothergill echoed the words with his eyes on the lounging shape of Mr. Lambert.

It was Livesay who fetched the chair; but Fothergill went with him, and when the four of them were settled under the shade of the limes, a pair of big hands and a big heart took control of the situation. The professor held the "bridge," yet in a delicate and subtle way he lifted Livesay up beside him. He spread the impression that his host was a man well worth talking and listening to; he kept the conversation running upon Livesay's lines, yet sweeping the young wife into it. Mr. Lambert he excluded, and kept in complete exclusion, genially repulsing that young man's attempts at assuming control.

The young wife was charmed. Here was a most original and radiant personality! It lit up everything, even throwing a glow of confidence into Livesay's shy, blue eyes. The man of middle years ceased to be paralysed by the dominating and supercilious arrogance of youth lounging in a chair. He talked, and talked well; his gloom disappeared.

When Professor Fothergill rose to go it was suggested that he might come down and dine on the following evening.

"Just as you are, you know; no formalities."

The caravaner bent over Mrs. Livesay's hand.

"I shall be delighted. It is a pleasure to talk to your husband—and to you."

Livesay walked to the gate with him, and, at the bend of the drive, the professor became aware of the quick turning of the

host's head. That backward glance was significant and pathetic. Livesay feared to leave youth with youth, and he was afraid of his own fear.

"Delightful home you have, Livesay."

"I'm glad you like it."

"Atmosphere, repose," and Fothergill turned and appeared to throw an innocent and appreciative glance about him; but he saw what he had expected to see: young Lambert standing by the hammock and looking down at Livesay's wife.

Lambert was lighting a cigarette.

"That old buffer thinks himself no small currant bun."

The girl's sensitive face betrayed a sudden clouding.

"He's not old."

"He may be able to give our old boy a year or two. Did you notice his trousers?"

She swung her feet out of the hammock and stood up.

"I think you are a beast," she said.

When Livesay came strolling back across the lawn, his young wife's eyes were fixed on him as though he were both husband and stranger. She appealed, she questioned. There was that in her which cried to Alan Livesay to stand between her and her own youth. She was a creature who yearned to cling, and to feel convinced of the strength and sureness of the man to whom she clung. Moreover, she was frightened. Youth has the voice of seduction, and she asked that love should stop her ears and close her eyes with kisses.

Livesay did not look at the young man, nor did he glance too closely at his wife.

"Interesting man, Professor Fothergill."

Young Lambert said something about Fothergill being a "prize bounder," and Grace glanced with quick and questioning anger at her man. Livesay stroked his moustache and looked sulky and self-conscious. He knew so little about women that he misread his young wife's glances, and showed a shy fear of hurting her, a fear that was felt by her as a vague mistrust.

"You don't think him a bounder, Alan?"

The younger man's voice cut in before Livesay could reply.

"Oh, uncle collects specimens. A new sort of white flannel cabbage butterfly, what!"

Livesay said nothing, and his wife, with sudden reproach in her eyes, gave an almost imperceptible shrug of the shoulders, and walked away in the direction of the house.

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"There was an exclamation, and a sudden quickening of the inert figure"—p. 962

Drawn by
C. P. Shilton

The arrogance of youth can be very cruel, and there were certain arrogances that roused in the caravaner a very potent and deadly anger. About dusk that evening he put on a grey cloth suit, and went down and trespassed within the old hedges of Cherry Hall. There was a moon that evening, and in the moonlight the caravaner watched a tragic shadow show of greedy and urgent youth pursuing a love that fluttered and resisted.

"Don't, Hector; it's horrible of you."

"Rot, you don't care for him, and you know it. He's too old."

"But I do care!"

She beat him off with fluttering wings and fled like a bird, brushing close to the place where the caravaner stood concealed.

And in Fothergill there was pity and a great anger, for he had watched poor Livesay wandering in the orchard like an uncertain ghost, unable to convince himself that he was young enough to convince the heart of his wife.

Fothergill sat up late in his green caravan watching the moonlight splashing through the pines. He was pondering the case of the Livesays, and the primitive thing that threatened their happiness; and in his solving of such problems he trusted to his intuition and the human wisdom of a man who had loved greatly and lived as greatly as he had loved. When the forces of life lay a plot against the soul, it is necessary to lay a counterplot.

The caravaner found the Livesays alone

THE QUIVER

when he went down to dine at Cherry Hall. He was aware of a feeling of constraint in the house, but in a little while he had swept it aside. He talked; he told ridiculous stories, and made these two troubled souls laugh, for laughter and tears bring people together.

Towards the end of the meal he touched upon the question of fishing.

"I hear that you have an old stew-pond, Livesay."

"Are you a fisherman?"

"I am."

"If you care to fish, I can fit you out. There is an old punt, and plenty of rainbow trout."

"My dear fellow, I should love it. When I have a problem to think out, I go and fish. But what about the depth of the water?"

He laughed.

"The absurd fact is—I can't swim. I suppose your husband swims, Mrs. Livesay?"

"You do, Alan. I remember you telling me—"

Livesay smiled at her shyly.

"I used to play a lot of water-polo. But the old punt is fairly steady, professor."

"And so am I. My centre of gravity is not easily upset. I thought I ought to warn you, Livesay; but I am insured!"

They laughed at the picture the professor drew of Leviathan floundering among the lilies, and with Grace Livesay suggesting coffee on the veranda they went out—a happy party of three—to discover the red end of a cigarette and a long and complacent figure occupying one of the cane chairs.

Fothergill sensed a sudden rigidity in the young wife.

"Hector!"

Livesay had paused at the open French window, like a man caught by a sudden spasm of pain. Fothergill was lighting a cigar, vividly aware of the presence of a spirit of evil, of the shadow of a selfish and vainglorious lust. He said nothing. He got his cigar well alight, watching to see whether young Lambert made any attempt to rise, but the cub remained where he was, legs crossed, his head on a cushion.

"You were a jolly long time over dinner. Hallo, professor; how are the ologies?"

Fothergill gave one of his easy laughs, and moved in the dusk to the back of Lambert's chair.

"In great form. Yes; what a perfect night. Look at the moon; like a yellow dome."

And then the caravaner did an abominable thing. He began to recite a sonnet of Shakespeare's, and in his abandonment to the spirit of poetry, he let his left hand wander until the red end of the cigar was pressed inexorably against the top of Mr. Lambert's head.

There was an exclamation, and a sudden quickening of the inert figure.

"Hang it all, sir!"

"My dear fellow, what is the matter?"

"That — cigar of yours! My head!"

"Dear me," said the professor, "how very unobservant of me! Yes; I think I can detect the smell of singed hair."

And someone was laughing as though a tense thread of emotion had been broken, and that someone was Alan Livesay's wife.

Next day the caravaner went fishing. He had the necessary tackle with him in his travelling home, and he embarked in Livesay's old black punt upon the placid surface of the stew-pond. It was a soft and gentle afternoon, the sky clouded with a level greyness that presaged rain, and this green valley with its motionless trees cherished the beauty of its stillness. Somewhere a wood-pigeon was uttering its soothing note, and a few red cattle browsed and flicked their tails in one of the meadows.

Fothergill moored the punt to the punt pole in the centre of the pool. The water was some ten feet deep here, but clear of weeds, and the professor arranged himself and his stool so that he sat facing Cherry Hall. He could see the chimneys of the house, the orchard trees, and the swing-gate opening from the orchard into the green meadow that encompassed the pool. Fothergill got out his rod and line, rubbed some oil of lavender over his face and neck to discourage all winged creatures, and examined his fly-book. His face wore an expression of roguish tranquillity.

He began to fish; but the artificial fly in the water and his playing of it did not monopolize his attention. He was watching that gate in the orchard hedge. It was possible that Livesay might join him.

He had landed a nice trout when he became aware of a figure passing through the orchard gate. It was Livesay; Fothergill knew him by his squarish figure, his grey tweed suit, and by the way he walked—like a man who was tired. He had a rod in a case under his arm.

Professor Fothergill smiled. This other fish might rise to the subtle bait!

A minute later he was waving a hand to

Livesay water.

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THE GREEN CARAVAN

Livesay, and speaking to him across the water.

"Splendid. Wait a second. I'll unhitch and come and fetch you off."

He rose, unfastened the rope, and proceeded to pull out the pole, but whether it was his weight, or some piece of clumsiness that caused the disaster, the punt and the professor parted company, and Livesay saw him struggling in the water.

When Alan Livesay reached him the professor was giving a very good imitation of a drowning man. He floundered and gasped, but somehow he had managed to retain his sense of humour.

"Leviathan—after all. Catch hold—my hair. I'll keep still."

"Don't clutch at me, Fothergill."

"I won't."

Alan Livesay got him ashore, and the caravaner lay on the grass coughing and panting, but with his gratitude overcoming his distress.

"My dear chap—a near thing. I owe my life to you. I might have drowned you."

Livesay, dripping like a brown dog, bent over him anxiously.

"That's all right. Have you swallowed much water?"

"Oh, some. I shall be all right in a minute."

"Sure?"

"Quite sure."

"You gave me a fright."

"Nothing like what I gave myself! After all, my dear chap, there are some advantages in having long hair!"

In a little while the caravaner was on his feet, and glancing whimsically at Livesay's clothes and his own soaked flannels.

"A couple of drowned rats. What about a change?"

"I can lend you some dry clothes."

"I am most horribly in your debt, Livesay. But for your pluck, clothes would have ceased to be of any importance."

"Oh, that's quite all right," said the shy man.

Fothergill laid a hand on his wet shoulder.

"By Jove, I should feel inclined to swagger if I had pulled a fourteen-stone carcase out of that pool. But you are one of those quiet chaps, Livesay, who always

manage to do the big thing without boasting about it. Come, I feel that I have got half Niagara in my shoes!"

They made for Cherry Hall, and when they had passed through the orchard gate the caravaner slipped an arm under Livesay's and held him fast.

"That little wife of yours—?"

"I left her on the lawn. Perhaps we had better sneak in round the stables."

"Why?"

"Well, you see—"

"I don't see. But what I do see, Livesay, is that you have done a very brave thing. It is no use my thanking you; you are far too modest; I am going to thank the little woman who loves you."

And that was what he did. He took Livesay by the arm and paraded him upon the lawn where that inestimable cub was trying to regain the lost dignity that the caravaner's cigar had turned into sudden smoke. Grace Livesay was on guard behind a book, but she saw these two sodden figures crossing the lawn.

She was out of the hammock with a quick rush of emotional colour. Her lips moved, but no words came. It was the caravaner who supplied the words.

"Mrs. Livesay, your husband has just saved my life. How he got me ashore—Heaven knows! I fell out of the punt."

She looked at her husband, and her lips trembled.

"Oh, Alan!"

The caravaner shook his wet hair like a lion, and drew to one side.

"Plunged in to save me, clothes and all. But—he is so dreadfully modest, Mrs. Livesay. Brave men are. I shall have to thank you—"

But she was not looking at the caravaner. She seemed to have forgotten all about him. Her hands went out to her husband; her face was aglow.

"Oh, Alan, how splendid of you!"

She was caught and held in his wet arms.

"You might have been drowned, dear; you might have been drowned."

Professor Fothergill had crossed over to Mr. Lambert.

"Well, my young friend," he said, "I hope my cauterizing of your head has reduced some of the swelling!"

(Next month Warwick Deeping continues this series with a story entitled "The Man who had Blundered.")



The Quiver

The Magazine for the Home

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The Man Who Had Blundered

By
WARWICK DEEPING

No. 2 in the Series, "The Green Caravan"

PROFESSOR FOTHERGILL was negotiating Puck Hill. The green caravan had just dipped below the brow of it, with one wheel chained and the professor holding the grey horse's head, for Puck Hill was like its name, elvish, circuitous, and full of mischief. Its surface was a slither of loose stones between high banks and overhanging hedges, and so steep was the gradient that the road appeared to plunge towards the blue of the sea.

The professor addressed the grey horse.

"Steady, my lad. Softlee walkee gettee downee. Remember my willow-pattern plates and that Spode tea service!"

He helped the horse, steadying him, and using his weight and strength on the near shaft. He had a way with animals, as he had with men, and the green caravan had just negotiated one of the most dangerous curves when Fothergill heard a sound that made him glance back over his shoulder. A car was coming down Puck Hill as though Puck Hill were as tame and as civilized as some of the undulations on the main road between Esher and Cobham.

The caravaner nearly swore. There was the wild yelp of a motor-horn as Fothergill threw all his weight against the horse and urged him over on to the near side. The green caravan took on an alarming tilt. Something fell and smashed.

"Dash it, there goes the tea service!"

But there were other noises behind: a scattering of stones, the breaking of glass, and a conflict between brushwood and metal, and as soon as Fothergill got the caravan anchored against the near bank of the lane he gave his attention to what had happened behind him.

A grey two-seater car hung diagonally across the road, with its bonnet in one hedge and its stern jammed into the opposite bank. The driver was still in the seat, picking the glass from the broken screen out of his lap, and apparently unhurt.

The professor jammed a boulder under one wheel, and went back to give vent to self-expression.

"My dear sir, it would be superfluous to call you a silly fool."

The occupant of the car was a tall, thin man with pale blue eyes, a slightly hooked nose, and black hair showing a powdering of grey at the temples. He sat staring at the tawny largeness of the caravaner. His pale eyes had a bewildered expression.

"I beg your pardon?"

Professor Fothergill regarded him, and refrained from further irony, for the man in the smashed car made him think of a patient groping his way back into consciousness after a long sleep under chloroform.

"Forty miles an hour, you know, on a hill like this!" He pointed to the speedometer. "Suicidal!"

The word had a most extraordinary effect on the man in the car. His eyes dilated; his retracted lips showed the gleam of his teeth. He slipped sideways from behind the steering wheel, and, leaning over towards the caravaner, he looked at him with a face of fury.

"What the dickens do you mean?"

Fothergill remained absolutely still.

"I said that it was rather rash—"

The man stood up. He was rigid with some suppressed emotion; but as he looked at the green caravan, he appeared to lose all self-control. He shook a fist at it. He raged like some unpleasant fanatic provoking the baser instincts of a crowd.

"What are you doing here, blocking the roads with a wretched thing like that? You got in my way. A great, green, clumsy contraption—filling up the whole road. I have come down this hill hundreds of times. I might have smashed you. By —, I wish I had smashed you."

Fothergill kept a perfectly grave face. He had been surprised by this eruption of strange fury; but as he realized the almost

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hysterical nature of the outburst, he forgave it. Normal men did not behave like this. The smashed car seemed to symbolize the breaking of some other and more delicate piece of mechanism.

"I'm sorry," he said gently; "I am afraid I was in your way."

That soft answer of his and the sympathy in his voice were like cold water flung in the white face of the man who had lost his self-control. He seemed to gasp. The fury faded out of his eyes. He lurched out of the car, sat down abruptly on one of the grass banks, covered his face with his hands, and burst into tears.

Professor Fothergill stood watching him. His eyes expressed curiosity, pity, and more than pity. There was a tragedy here; he felt it, and his hands of healing were ready to touch and to comfort. For fully five minutes the man sat there and sobbed, and such emotion in a man can be dreadful and very moving.

Presently the storm died out of him. He pulled himself together and, slamming the door of his shame, showed to the caravaner a pair of resentful eyes.

"I have been overworked. Dashed silly of me."

He got on his feet with an attempt at jauntness, and, turning to look at the wrecked car, assumed an air of nonchalance.

"Temper — you know. Rather childish. I did not think I should explode quite so badly."

Professor Fothergill stood beside him, and appeared to be examining the car.

"One does. I can remember breaking my bed. A blaze of rage."

The other gave him a quick and nervous glance.

"Oh? What for?" he inquired in jerky tones.

"I was ill—and I wasn't getting well as

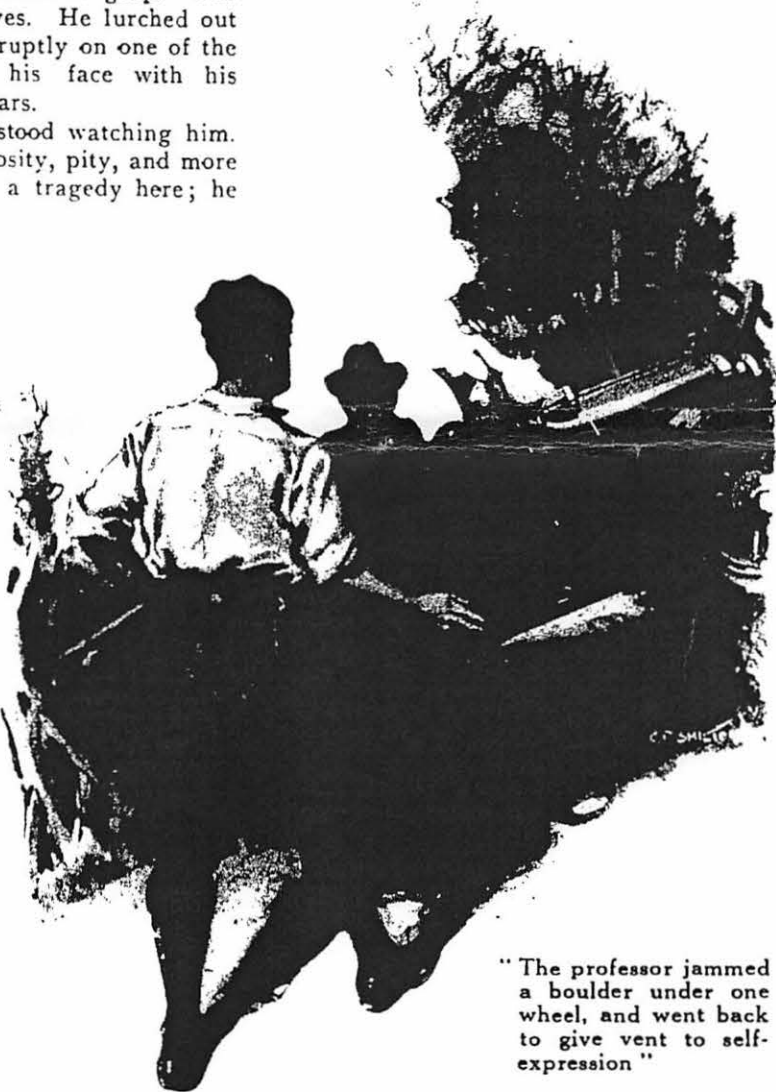
quickly as I wanted to get well. Like you—I was in a hurry."

"Yes—a hurry. I'm a doctor."

"A bad case waiting for you, perhaps?"

"Yes; rather a bad case."

"Oh, well—I forgive you, doctor. Now, what are we going to do about it? That car must be moved, or someone will come down the side of this roof and trip over it. Supposing—I see to the car for you. . . ."



"The professor jammed a boulder under one wheel, and went back to give vent to self-expression"

The suggestion was obvious—that the doctor should go ahead and see his patient; but no sooner had Fothergill made the suggestion than he sensed in the man beside him a curious shrinking from the responsibility ahead of him. Almost he had a furtive look. His figure sagged slackly. It was possible that the accident had shaken his nerve.

THE QUITTER

"I can't leave the car like this."

"My dear chap—the patient is a live thing—"

His companion gave a jerk of the head. His eyes were both frightened and angry.

"Thank you. I quite realize my responsibilities. The fact is—"

"Have you far to go?"

"Down there; one of the cottages lying under the old cliff."

Fothergill's eyes were growing wise.

"The fact is, my dear chap, you are a bit shaken. Now, look here—among other things, I happen to be a medical man. Supposing I get my old green bus to the bottom of the hill and go and see your patient for you—while you walk back to the village and get help."

It was the most rational suggestion, and yet—as the caravaner made it, he discovered something very like terror on the face of the other man.

"Thanks. Very good of you; but I should be all right in five minutes. My name's Tell—Tell of Westling."

He spoke with jerky eagerness.

"No need to trouble you. Quite all right now. If you could—"

And suddenly he grew inarticulate, for Fothergill's eyes were looking straight into his with such a depth of kindness and with so grave and compelling a scrutiny that Tell seemed to become a helpless child. He stood with his mouth open, vaguely smiling, but with some paralysing fear in the trembling of his inner consciousness. He was pathetic.

Fothergill laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Tell, sit down and rest—for five minutes. Then—go up to the village and get someone to shift your car."

He spoke gently, very gently, but with an air of compelling authority.

"Now sit down, my dear chap."

The other man obeyed him, like a fatalist surrendering some critical choice into hands that were stronger than his.

Professor Fothergill returned to the grey horse and the green caravan, and completing the descent of Puck Hill, found himself on a stretch of sandy common between the old cliff and the sea. Three or four cottages lay under the cliff, and after fastening the grey horse to the trunk of a wind-blown thorn tree, the caravaner made his way towards the group of cottages. One of them had white walls and a tarred roof. Fishing nets were spread on the short turf, and half a dozen children had been playing some game under the lee of an old boat.

They were staring at the caravaner and his caravan, and Fothergill hailed them.

"Will one of you tell me which is the cottage where the doctor goes?"

A girl pointed to the black and white building.

"That 'un—there."

"Thank you," and the professor waved a hand and smiled.

A tarred gate opened on a shingled path, and as Fothergill's feet crunched over the shingle the cottage door revealed the anxious face of an old woman. She looked mistrustfully at Fothergill, and to judge by her tired eyes she was short of sleep.

"There is someone ill here?"

"There be."

"Dr. Tell has had an accident with his car, and as I am a doctor I offered to come here."

The old woman seemed unimpressed by his old riding breeches and his collarless shirt, and the caravaner, smilingly explaining that he was on a holiday, made a suggestive movement towards the door.

"Who is it that is ill?"

"My son, doctor. He be terrible bad, retching and writhing with pain."

"We must put a stop to that."

Her keen old eyes questioned him and were satisfied, and her manner changed. She stood back with a "Come in, sir," and Fothergill entered the cottage. He could hear sounds in a room above, a man's groans and the voice of a woman compassionate and afraid.

The old woman called up the stairs.

"Jenny, here be a doctor gentleman come for Dr. Tell."

She turned to Fothergill.

"Jenny's Tom's wife. Will you go up, sir."

Professor Fothergill went up to find a man grey as ashes lying all twisted in the bed, with a young woman hanging over him. A basin stood on a chair beside the bed, and the room was full of an indescribable yet suggestive odour. A glimpse of the man's face and one whiff of that odour made Fothergill glance instantly at the contents of the basin.

The woman's eyes were like the eyes of a frightened animal. They cried out for help, help for the man of hers who was in anguish. She winced at every sound, and with every agonized movement.

"Oh, doctor, he be bad. What is it?"

Fothergill drew another chair beside the bed and sat down.

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THE MAN WHO HAD BLUNDERED

"Now then, my lad, we must put this right. Tell me all about it."

It was swiftly told, and as the professor's big and gentle hands drew back the clothes his face became greatly grave and ominous. He touched the man with delicate care, as though fearing to touch him, for the case was obvious and simple, terribly simple.

He rose and glanced at the wife.

"I will see Dr. Tell at once. We must do something for your husband."

He made a sign to her to follow, and in the little room at the foot of the stairs the two women waited dumbly for the verdict.

"I am afraid there will have to be an operation."

"Oh, doctor, is he goin' t' die?"

The professor patted the wife's shoulder.

"Courage, my lass; not if we can help it. Dr. Tell warned me that the case was serious. You are giving him nothing to eat?"

"He can't keep nothing down, sir."

"A little water to moisten his mouth, that and nothing else. By the way, when did Dr. Tell first see your husband?"

"Three days ago, doctor."

Fothergill moved to the door.

"Now, I will go and make arrangements. I hope to be back in an hour."

The caravaner closed the door of the cottage, and as he looked towards his caravan he saw a man crossing the common, and the man was Dr. Tell. There was a grimness in Fothergill's eyes as he walked quickly down the path and out of the gate to meet Tell before the women in the cottage should see him. He had certain things to say to Ambrose Tell.

The children had disappeared, and the professor met the doctor where the old boat lay blistering. The caravaner's eyes were the eyes of a judge, and the other man's face was like flickering water in the glare of the sun.

"Tell, I have to ask you what this means. You saw that man three days ago."

"Certainly."

"And the diagnosis was obvious."

"No, I don't allow that. What—what do you make of it?"

The professor looked at him. Then he laid a big hand on the other's shoulder.

"You know. What the devil have you been doing, man? To leave a strangulated hernia three days?"

"It was not strangulated—"

"You tried to reduce it. Of course, you tried to reduce it—and failed. Why did

you leave him like that? You must tell me."

Tell's face was tragic.

"How dare you suggest—"

"My friend, put all the false pride aside. There is a mystery here. I help people; I don't damn them. Let's talk."

He changed his gentle grip from the shoulder to the arm, and the doctor did not resist it. He let the caravaner march him to the shingle bank above the sea, and there they sat down side by side, with the sea wind blowing in the professor's hair and the sunlight shining full upon the other man's face. The caravaner pulled out his pipe and filled it, while Tell picked up handfuls of pebbles and let them run like water through his trembling fingers.

"Man, why did you funk it?"

Tell's face was averted, the set of his shoulders miserable and sullen.

"I want you to tell me because I want to help you. Did you funk it?"

Tell made an assenting movement of the head.

The caravaner lit his pipe and stared out to sea, where the brown sails of a few fishing-boats stood out against the blue. He was aware of the tragic and tormented figure beside him, and his pity went out to it.

"Tell me. There must be a reason. Why has your nerve gone? I understand these things, my dear fellow."

The doctor jabbed a hand deep into the shingle and gripped another handful of stones.

"You wouldn't understand this."

The professor's voice was gentle and reassuring.

"Oh, yes, I should. Tell me; when you came down that hill an hour ago—"

The other made a slight movement.

"You did not expect to reach the bottom alive?"

There was a moment's silence, and then came the fierce and desperate question:

"How do you know?"

"I felt it. Is it true?"

Ambrose Tell nodded.

"Quite true. But for your dashed caravan! And I had no luck."

The professor rolled over on his side, sprawling comfortably on the sun-warmed shingle, as though the one retort to all human frettings and fears was to be found in an attitude of repose. He basked; he blew smoke, as though he had no potential suicide beside him. He was a big animal,

THE QUIVER

and from him emanated vibrations of strength and of courage.

"I question the luck of it, my dear chap. But how did it begin?"

Tell drew his knees up sharply under his chin.

"Why should you know?"

"Because my knowing will help you. Look here, man, we are doctors, both of us, and you are repressing something. It has been eating into your secret soul. Get rid of it; let it out."

"I can't."

The professor sat up.

"Then be sure that it will kill you. Come, out with it. Spue out the devil and you will be healed."

Suddenly Ambrose Tell sprang up and began to tramp to and fro on the loose shingle. It crackled and scattered under his feet with a sound of uneasy protest, and the caravaner lay there thinking of some dim figure in Hades plodding blindly over a ghastly wilderness of withered grass and clattering stones. Poor Tell's secret was rattling in his throat, choking him, stifling the breath of his soul.

He came to an abrupt pause, and stood staring at the caravaner's legs sprawled out upon the shingle.

"I'll tell you. It was like this. About a year ago I undertook an operation; I had done the same thing before many times, but—I blundered. It was a most dreadful and wanton blunder. The man died."

He held up a hand for silence.

"Wait. I'll get rid of the whole of it. That was not the worst. I was frightened, and fear tempted me, and I lied. I pretended that I had carried the thing through successfully, and that the man had died from shock."

He glanced for a moment at Fothergill's face.

"My blunder killed him. I felt myself a liar and a murderer, and ever since the secret has been poisoning my life. My nerve began to go. I felt hunted; I dreaded responsibility—another such ordeal. I felt I could not touch a knife. And then three days ago—"

The professor nodded.

"I understand. And when you came to that hill—"

"Exactly. A blind impulse seized me. I knew that man would die unless— And I could not make up my mind. I could not confess— And the impulse—to smash blindly into space, to get out of the wretched

tangle. I put the car at it—and then I saw your caravan."

The professor raised a face of glowing and human humour.

"Providence, my dear chap. I guess that God stuck me there on Puck Hill."

The caravaner lay flat on his back, one leg crooked over the other, his arms spread, his eyes looking up at the sky. He seemed part of the sunlight and the brown shingle and the sea, and Tell, standing there in his soul's nakedness, and emptied of all emotion, glanced at him with wonder. Did this man feel? Had he, in his misery, flung himself like meat to a lion? What did the big man mean to do?

The professor lay and smiled.

"So that's that. Lie down, my dear chap, and listen to the sea. By Jove, I could go to sleep here."

Tell was reproachful, faintly bewildered.

"Sleep! I have had hardly any sleep for two nights."

"Well, take a nap now. Half-an-hour's relaxation, and then we will get on with the job. I suppose you have your instruments, etc., in the car?"

He beamed up at Tell, whose haggard face betrayed a renewal of his fear.

"Yes. But what do you mean?"

"Why, obviously, you are going to operate on that chap; I'll give the anæsthetic for you. And to-night you will sleep like a top."

He smiled up at the other man, and his smile radiated confidence, courage, optimism. It suggested all that poor Tell had lost, while assuming that nothing was lost.

"Man, I can't—I daren't—"

"You can. Of course you can. Besides, my dear chap, you have got to."

Tell's face remained vacant and bewildered. The caravaner's voice went on:

"Of course you can do it. I have been watching your hands, and they are the hands of a surgeon. And think of that poor fellow squirming and groaning—and calling for you. He wants you. And you, the man of skill, are going to cut the knot of his suffering. I know you can do it. I know."

He sat up suddenly, with one arm outstretched.

"Now, then, we'll go and get the job done. And then we will have tea in my caravan."

That which Fothergill had willed happened. His vital confidence seemed to steal

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"Oh, doctor, I don't know what I'm doing ; I feel all queer"

into the emptiness of Tell's soul, and to rouse in it a quick reaction. The man in the doctor turned to fight, and as the caravaner watched him he was aware of a curious stiffening of the slack figure and a brightening of the pale eyes.

"Yes, let's get the job done. You will give the anæsthetic. The car is still in the lane."

His eagerness seemed to increase with every step he took in this march to recover his self-respect. He caught Fothergill by the arm and hurried him towards the cottage.

"You believe I can do it?"

"I know you can."

In half an hour they had made their preparations, and the fisherman was lying on a stout deal table and going tranquilly to sleep under the professor's capable hands. Tell was waiting, his instruments sterilized

and ready in a glass dish. His gloved hands rested gently on the patient's body, and Fothergill noticed that there was no trembling of those hands.

"Ready, my dear chap. He is well under."

Tell drew a deep breath. He picked up the knife, hesitated for one moment, and then with delicate and skilful niceness made his incision in the skin.

The caravaner remained absolutely still and silent, a faint yet serious smile in his eyes, and his forehead suggesting intense and concentrated thought. He watched the man's breathing, and he watched Tell's hands. They were deliberate, skilful and unfurried, and all the lines of the doctor's intent face were curiously and serenely confident. He worked, absorbed in the critical and intricate interest of the task, forgetful of self, sure and untroubled.

THE QUIVER

Presently Tell straightened. An expression of supreme happiness spread over his face; he looked at the unconscious man as though he loved him; he smiled. His eyes shifted their glance and met the caravaner's eyes, and something very beautiful and touching passed between them.

"Thank you, my dear sir."

"Well, you did that splendidly. I knew you would."

When the young wife was told that the operation had been successful and that her man should live, she rested her head for a moment against Tell's shoulder.

"Oh, doctor, I don't know what I'm doing; I feel all queer. God bless you, doctor."

Tell winced, and his eyes had the dimness of tears.

"That's all right. You owe more to my friend here than you do to me. I shall look in again to-night."

Out in the open, and with the wind blowing off the sea, he walked with his head bare and a shine in his eyes. He felt a free man again, and yet not quite free, for that other memory still lingered. The caravaner left him alone, for there was something sacred in Ambrose Tell's long silence. And not till the professor had the kettle boiling, and his Spode cups and plates were set out on the caravan table, did Dr. Tell break that silence.

"I hope your tea service did not suffer?"

"One solitary cup. I don't grudge it."

"I'll replace that cup. It is about the only thing I can do. But I should like you to see my wife and children."

During tea he lay back in the caravaner's arm-chair, his eyes looking through the curtained window at the expanse of the sea. Once or twice he passed a hand slowly across his forehead as though brushing something away.

"Professor Fothergill, I want to ask you a question."

"Ask it, my dear chap."

"Do you think I ought to confess about that other case?"

He watched the caravaner's face as with deliberation he refilled his tea-cup.

"I will reply with a question. Would it do anyone any good? How could it? It

isn't as if you had not suffered. Why should you make other people suffer for a thing that has happened and cannot be mended?"

Tell lay back in his chair.

"I am a man who will always carry a secret wound, a wound of remembrance."

"But to-day you began the healing of that wound. Show me the man who has never made a mistake."

In the cool of the evening a hired car carried them to Tell's home, an old red house in a red village; and here, in the doctor's garden, a little woman with anxious and watchful eyes met them as though she had passed a year of watching and suspense. She looked at the caravaner and she looked at Tell, and her troubled face seemed on the edge of tears.

Ambrose Tell went up and kissed her.

"Well, Kitty."

Her eyes gazed into his. She saw something there that she had despaired of seeing, peace, quiet, a faint glint of remembered laughter.

"The old car nearly landed me, but I have managed to pull poor Harrison through. This is my friend Professor Fothergill. We met on Puck Hill."

The caravaner held Kitty Tell's hand.

"Your husband was in a hurry. I travel in a caravan, and he nearly broke all my china. He owes me one Spode tea-cup."

She was looking into Fothergill's wise, kind eyes, as though to read some secret there.

"We shall have to replace the tea-cup, Professor Fothergill. Of course, Ambrose—"

But Ambrose Tell had made a sudden excursion across the lawn towards two small girls, who stood regarding him with an air of solemn uncertainty. For during the last few months their daddy had become a strange creature of frightening moods and petulances and irritations.

"Hallo, hallo. Joan, Phyllis—!"

There was a little, delighted mingling of the man and his children, and again Kitty Tell's eyes met the caravaner's. She smiled. She drew a deep breath; the suspense melted from her face; she looked ten years younger.

(Next month Warwick Deeping will give the story of "The Professor at Greenwater Mill")



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THE PROFESSOR AT "GREENWATER MILL"

by WARWICK DEEPING

NEEDLESS to say, there were times when Professor Fothergill and the green caravan parted company, and he was to be found in that little Georgian house at Chelsea with its windows overlooking the Thames. People came to him here, as Mrs. Mortimer came to him on the day in May, bringing a letter and a heart that was ready to break.

Professor Fothergill read the letter. It was from a mutual friend, and it introduced the little woman who was sitting by the window and watching the pale sunset on the river. She had a face of infinite sadness, and she was dressed in black.

"DEAR PROFESSOR,—I have sent Alice Mortimer to you. Perhaps you can help her, you who have helped so many of us—"

He glanced at her over the letter, and the lostness and the littleness of her filled him with compassion.

"Dear lady, what is the trouble?"

She turned to him with an air of helplessness, and behind it was fear.

"But why should I trouble you?"

"It is no trouble. If you can bring yourself to tell me."

She looked at him with pale steadfastness.

"It concerns my son. He was all I had, and I have lost him. It was my own fault."

"He is dead?"

"No—but dead to me."

She sighed. Her hands were twisting at a handkerchief. She spoke with an air of strained sadness.

"Perhaps I had better tell you everything. May I?"

He nodded, gently.

"If you will, I shall appreciate it and respect it. But tell me, how old is your son?"

"Twenty-four."

"And his work?"

"He is a doctor—just qualified. He has

done so very brilliantly; he was so keen, until—until—someone told him. Oh, it happened like this. There was insanity in my husband's family; I did not know it when I married him and had my child. And—he—my husband developed insanity. He killed himself."

"How long ago was that?"

"Oh—twenty years."

"And your son?"

"Roy was a beautiful boy. He had no blemish. And I was tempted. I wanted to hide the tragedy from him. I did hide it; I thought it better that he should not know. Six months ago—"

She hesitated, and fought with some spasm of emotion.

"Yes, six months ago—he—fell in love. And then—I realized—and I was horribly afraid. I asked myself, 'Why should he know?' You see, if I had been jealous, selfish—I was jealous, but I beat it down. I decided not to tell him."

"To trust to fortune, as we call it?"

"Yes. I know—now—that I was wrong. Oh, horribly wrong. My love lacked courage. And then—"

"Someone else told him?"

"Yes, a man who happened to know, a man who happened to be fond of the same girl. He told the girl."

"I know that sort of conscientious fellow! And she?"

"Oh, you can understand what happened then."

She broke down, and the professor let her weep. He sat there in one of his great, wise stillnesses, and suffered this poor, tragic mother to empty her heart. It would appear that the son had come to her, raging, demanding the truth; and when, in despair, she had confessed that what he had heard was true, he had broken out into bitter and lamentable accusations. "You let me walk blindly into this horror. You have acted a lie to me. You ought to have warned me."

She had tried to plead with him, to make

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him understand why she had concealed his heritage from him.

"But he seemed beside himself. He would not listen. 'You have broken me—broken my life. If I had known—I might have kept myself from caring about Joan.' Oh, my dear sir, I sat there and wished that I had never borne him, not because of my pain, but because of his."

She let her hands fall.

"He went away. He had broken with the girl. I have had but one letter from him—a terrible letter, because it was so gentle."

"Where is he?"

"In the country, at a lonely place called Greenwater Mill."

"Hampshire?"

"Yes."

"I know it."

"Mother—he wrote—'do not try to come to me. Most solemnly I warn you not to come. I am here, trying to pick up the threads. I want to be alone.' Alone! That is why I am afraid."

She raised her eyes to Fothergill's.

"Do you understand my fear?"

He nodded.

"I think I do. You dread lest—"

"Yes. He may do what his father did. And I—feel helpless, paralysed. I dare not go. But if someone—you—"

Her eyes pleaded, and the Professor rose, and, bending over her, laid a big hand gently on her shoulder.

"I will. My old caravan is at Basingstoke. I intended taking to the road next week. I will go down there to-night."

She caught his hand.

"Oh, God bless you. But he must not know that I—"

"He will not know. You can trust me implicitly."

It was six o'clock on an evening in May when the grey horse and the green caravan came to rest in that Hampshire valley; nor was it the Professor's first visit to Mill Farm. The caravan was backed up against an old orchard. Birds sang. The sliding water went softly towards the old mill and the soft thunder of the sluices, and everywhere was a greenness, a plaintive, joyous mystery. It was the spring of the year, and somewhere youth was mocked by it.

The Caravaner lit his fire, made tea, and watched the water and the trees, those sad willows, and those splendid beeches where bluebells made pools of blueness amid the brown of last year's leaves. The tiled roof

and the dim red walls of the mill-house showed through the green of the willows. And into the Caravaner's mind came a vision of the Lady of Shalott, drifting in her black barge through the green of the young year, past the sweet-smelling white thorns, unhappy love loosed on its last journey.

He lit a pipe and strolled along the river bank to the mill-house. He crossed a foot-bridge. The mill wheels were still, but the sluice thundered, and on the platform above the pool Fothergill saw a young man leaning on the old brick wall, watching the troubled water. He was a tall youngster, dark, with a sensitive and clever face. He wore boating flannels and no hat.

The setting sun put a glamour of gold upon the place, and into this brilliant light came the large tawiness of the Caravaner, head aglow, eyes blue as the zenith, shirt open at the throat. He idled; he blew smoke. With hands stuffed into his pockets, he placed himself within a yard of young Roy Mortimer, and watched the water and said nothing.

The younger man had given him one resentful glance, and then looked away. The Caravaner did not heed him; he remained greatly still, placidly puffing, his head thrown slightly back as though to catch the whole of the sunset.

Mortimer gave a second glance at him. Another minute passed, and neither of them had uttered a word.

The professor rested his arms on the wall and watched the swirl of the water from the sluice.

"Restful—very," he said laconically.

The younger man made a slight movement.

"Very."

"No need to talk—here. You feel like that? Yes, or you surely would not be here."

Mortimer remained silent. But presently he shot a little, curious glance at the stranger, a glance in which his loneliness allowed itself to be persuaded by an instinctive attraction towards the Caravaner. He supposed him to be an artist, or at least some unconventional person who did not put on a black coat to earn his living.

"You know this place, sir?"

"Yes, I have been here before, many times. My caravan is over there by the Mill Farm orchard."

Young Mortimer's melancholy eyes brightened for a moment.

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"The Caravaner came out into the moonlight. 'I suppose, like me, you are apt to be moonstruck. Look at the light on the water. It is worth living to see—that.' Mortimer gave a queer, inarticulate cry, and seemed to fall forward on to the wall. 'Live! I don't want to live!'"—p. 1154

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"A caravan! Do you go about the country in it?"

"Yes. Ever since I lost my wife I find that I cannot settle for long in cities."

His companion stared at the tree tops.

"Yes, this green English sadness. Soothing. It gets you; you just sink into it."

"And it heals us. I know."

It was Fothergill who suggested that Mortimer could come along to his caravan after supper and smoke a pipe.

"My name's Fothergill. I can give you a cup of coffee. Just as the mood takes you."

Mortimer hesitated.

"Thanks. May I leave it open? You see, I am trying to work—the thesis for my M.D."

"Well, we will leave it open. You will find me there, studying the stars."

He turned with a smile and a stretching of the arms.

"I am looking forward to to-morrow morning's bathe. Well, stroll along—if you care to and can spare the time."

Mortimer came. He sat in a deck-chair, and looked at the stars above the beech woods, and smoked his pipe. He did not talk much. He sat there like a man dreaming a kind of tragic day-dream; nor did the Caravaner vex him with words. A silent sympathy seemed to envelop them. This big man was refreshing; he had an atmosphere; he did not ask questions.

When Mortimer rose to go, Fothergill strolled a little way with him across the dew-wet grass.

"Care to join me in a dip to-morrow?"

"I might."

"Seven o'clock. I go off here under one of these willows."

That is the way their friendship began, and the Professor—in his wisdom—watched Alice Mortimer's son splashing beside him under the willows. A man who could get up and enjoy a swim was less likely to drown himself.

"By Jove, this makes one feel young. I always come out of the water thinking how many intensely interesting things there are to do. Work—you know, one's job."

The young face seemed to rest on the water.

"Yes, one's job. But then—"

"You had better come back and have some breakfast with me. I specialize in scrambled eggs."

"It's awfully good of you, sir."

"Not a bit; I like it."

He was a nice lad, the kind of lad that the Professor would have liked for a son, but he was difficult, dangerously difficult. He was one of those who went up to the stars and down to the deeps. In two days the Caravaner had got a gentle grip of him, but he knew his man. An incipient cheerfulness postulated a possible reaction, one of those sudden impulsive plunges into tragedy.

Mortimer might kill himself. It might happen suddenly. You could never be sure of such a man when the soul of him was still quivering after so poignant a shock.

Fothergill watched.

He was up at all sorts of hours in the morning, with the first greyness, and the first shrilling of the birds. He idled about the Mill House till after midnight, silent, like a big, protective spirit.

And then it happened, or rather—it was prevented from happening. The Professor was leaning on the wall under the shadow of the mill's big chestnut-tree when he saw a man come out of the house and into the moonlight. It was eleven o'clock, and the lights had been out in the house for over an hour.

The man approached the wall and, leaning over it, stared down at the mill-pool.

"Hallo, my dear fellow," said a voice; "you like the world when everybody else has gone to bed."

Young Mortimer gave a quick jerk of the head.

"Who's that?"

The Caravaner came out into the moonlight.

"I suppose, like me, you are apt to be moonstruck. Look at the light on the water. It is worth living to see—that."

Mortimer gave a queer, inarticulate cry, and seemed to fall forward on to the wall.

"Live! I don't want to live. Oh, I wish I could die."

Fothergill went to him and put a big arm round the rigid, renunciatory figure.

"I have felt like that, my son. I know what it means."

Neither of them went to bed that night. They wandered and talked, and sat in the moonlit beech woods, and wandered farther and came back again. And when the first greyness of the dawn spread over the willows and the river they were sitting on the steps of the green caravan, young Mortimer's head resting against the Professor's knees.

"Pride, my dear boy, pride."

"She had the grass

"Yes, but sort of outcas

"You will to say that I do tell you be vital and job."

"Yes, that Fothergill's

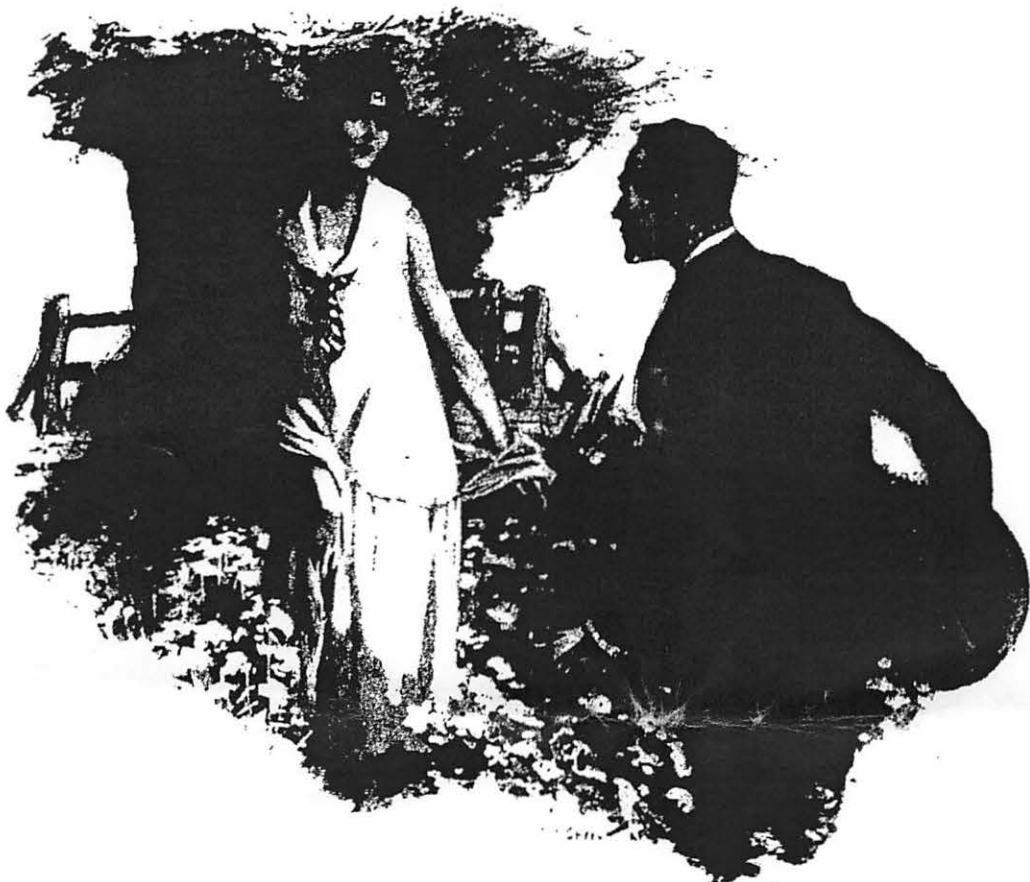
"I know.

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THE PROFESSOR AT "GREENWATER MILL"



"She had crossed the footbridge at the mill, and was coming over the grass to meet him. 'Joan! Why have you come?'"—p. 1157

*Drawn by
C. P. Shilton*

"Yes, but the taint. To feel oneself a sort of outcast."

"You will never be that. I am not going to say that I am older than you are, but I do tell you that to a man his life job can be vital and enthralling. You have your job."

"Yes, that's true. But I'm young——"

Fothergill's eyes were compassionate.

"I know. It is hard. And you feel——"

"Oh, it is not the sex thing so much, not the crude idea, but I shall never have a comrade. Think of that. I have given her up, and oh, you don't know how much I want her—now. She seemed part of my job, part of my pride in it. You see, Joan is not an ordinary girl. I mean she has got a beautiful soul above the ordinary things."

"Have you seen her since——?"

"No. How could I? I—felt that it might make her suffer."

He paused, watching the rising sun lighting up the beech woods.

"Professor, tell me—do all women want children?"

Fothergill's eyes smiled.

"No, not all women."

"But is it fair to deny a woman——?"

"I think that depends on the woman. After all, you know, children do not mean happiness. I have known many men love their jobs better than they loved their sons." Mortimer sighed.

"Poor old mother. I must make it up to her. I think I was a little mad. I see now—she wanted to save me."

"Yes, the mother instinct. But now, my son, I want you to make me a promise."

Mortimer sat very still.

"I know what you are going to ask me."

"Very well. Make me that promise."

"Shall I be able to keep it?"

"You will. Listen. Make a bargain with

THE QUIVER

me. Promise—that so long as I am here, or, rather, so long as this old green van is here—you will not do anything."

"I am afraid to promise."

"My dear boy, fight that fear. All life is fighting, effort, courage. Do you think that it is good for us to have things made too easy?"

Mortimer raised his head.

"You are right. I'll make you that promise."

That very afternoon the Professor had a wire from town. It appeared that he would have to be away for the night, or perhaps for two nights, and he called in Roy Mortimer to take charge.

"You might look after the caravan while I'm away. I would rather like you to sleep in it. Some of my belongings have a sentimental value. You will find plenty of books."

He left young Mortimer installed in the green van, and, climbing into the Mill Farm pony-cart that was taking him to the station, he waved a cheery hand.

"My cigarettes live in one of the lockers."

By six o'clock the Professor was in town and driving over Westminster Bridge in a taxi. The taxi took him to Ashley Gardens, and here in a flat overlooking the great red cathedral he found Alice Mortimer. But Alice Mortimer was not alone.

She rose to him with a flutter of fear.

"Oh, Professor—what news?"

"I left Roy in charge of my caravan."

"You could leave him? Oh, my dear sir! And I am forgetting. This is Joan Byward—the Joan."

The girl had risen. She was small and slight, with red-brown hair and a pair of very dark grey eyes in a serene, pale face. She had one of the most shapely little heads that Fothergill had ever seen, and she might have stepped out of some old Italian picture. The Professor looked at her with admiring eyes, and she looked at him.

"So this is Joan. I am very glad to meet you."

Gravely, she gave him her hand.

"And I. Mother has told me. We are grateful to you, both of us."

That word "mother" vibrated in Fothergill's ears. He glanced at Mrs. Mortimer, and he saw the shine in her eyes, the mother look, and it included Joan.

"She has been telling me, Professor. It is very wonderful and splendid."

"It is just—fate," said the girl. "I wonder, dear, if you would let me speak to

Professor Fothergill. I want to ask him—"

Mrs. Mortimer kissed her, and went softly out of the room.

They sat down, facing each other, and it was the girl who spoke.

"I want to marry him," she said.

Fothergill nodded his tawny head.

"Just that. But—you know?"

"Yes, I know. I know that it means giving up something, but I am willing to give up."

"Children?"

"Yes. You see, I have a feeling that he would be my child. He is such a boy; he will always be like that. And I can help him, and save him things. Do you think I am wrong?"

The Caravaner looked at her with a quiet smile.

"No. If you can love like that, dear child, I think that you are supremely right. Moreover, just at present he is on the edge of the beyond."

"You mean?"

"You mean so much to him. He, too, can love as people rarely love in these days of ours."

They had entered into a conspiracy before Professor Fothergill left for Chelsea, and he was off again early next morning, feeling vaguely anxious about poor Roy. That night of loneliness might have proved itself something of an ordeal, and as he drove through the lanes to Greenwater Mill, Fothergill wondered whether Mortimer's sky was clear or dark. There was a great clearness coming for him on the horizon if his manhood had the strength to wait.

He surprised Roy sitting on the caravan steps, and one glance at his face warned Fothergill that all was not well with him. He looked miserable and almost ashamed. There was no brightness in his greeting.

"Well, my lad! Can we manage a lunch? I had breakfast at half-past seven."

Mortimer got off the steps and looked vaguely into the caravan.

"I'm afraid we are out of eggs. Shall I look in the larder?"

"Leave it to me. I like concocting ingenious messes out of nothing. Have you ever tried cheese and raspberry jam?"

Mortimer had not a smile.

"Oh, anything you like, sir, so far as I am concerned."

They ate this picnic meal on the grass, with all the world of spring about them, a tantalizing sweet beauty and the singing

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"I don't think that promise,"

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"Yes, I know his own."

"No. It can be a stone. Afterwards."

Mortimer gave a look.

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THE PROFESSOR AT "GREENWATER MILL"

of birds, but young Mortimer's head drooped, and his face was mournful. He had gone down again into the deeps, and a mood of despair was upon him.

"I don't think I shall be able to keep that promise, sir."

He blurted the confession in a voice that was dull and hopeless.

"Too hard?"

"I felt confident till you left. But—last night—I could not sleep. The loneliness! And it seemed to me that life would be like the night, stretching on and on, and always I should be alone."

"No man need be lonely. Fight, my son, fight. Besides, there are other people. Think of their pride in you and what it means?"

"Yes, I know. But every man's life is his own."

"No. It cannot be, unless he is a clod or a stone. And, remember—there is the afterwards."

Mortimer gave him a sudden, questioning look.

"You believe in an afterwards?"

"I do."

All the rest of the day the Caravaner held him in a gentle and beneficent grip. They wandered, they talked, they washed and polished the green van; they cooked their supper over a fire of sticks and watched the sun go down in flame behind the trees.

That night the Caravaner put the young man into his own bed, and slept on a ground-sheet and a blanket under the van, but he kept vigil for many hours, listening for any sound of restlessness or of stirring in the cabin above. But Roy Mortimer slept, and in the morning he came out with the eyes of a child, wondering at something, strangely tranquillized.

"I have had a dream."

"A good dream?"

"Too good to be true."

"Say—good enough to be true."

The young man smiled.

"Yes—could it be true! But there was such gentleness in my dream, such sympathy, that somehow I feel changed. It is as though someone who loved me were near, would always be near."

"My son, hold to that dream."

The Professor and Roy Mortimer were lying under the willows by the river when Mortimer's dream came true. In the green quiet of the fields and above the murmur of the mill they heard a voice calling like the voice of the spring.

"Roy! Roy!"

Roy turned and sat up. His face had a look of wonder. Next moment he was on his feet, gazing, head thrown back, beholding some vision. The Caravaner sat very still. He heard young Mortimer utter a queer cry, and saw him start across the grass that was all yellow with buttercups.

"Joan! You—here?"

She had crossed the footbridge at the mill, and was coming over the grass to meet him. The Professor saw Roy Mortimer pause, hold back, as though denying himself the right to let his impulse rush towards the joy of his vision.

"Joan! Why have you come?"

"Because—I had to come. Roy—I want you."

"But, Joan—"

"I am not afraid."

The Caravaner watched their meeting. He saw them drift away together into the greenness, walking a little apart as though there was some solemn debate between them. They disappeared. The birds sang, the water flowed to the mill, a girl who was hanging out linen in the Mill Farm orchard joined her distant voice to the spring song. And Professor Fothergill lay and smiled, and watched the clouds and the water and the blue gleams of a kingfisher. Life was good, and he felt that he too had helped to make it good.

Four o'clock came. He glanced at his wrist-watch and, strolling to the caravan, set himself to prepare tea. He put the kettle on to boil, and took out three of the Spode tea-cups. Sitting on the steps of the caravan, with one eye on the kettle, he surveyed the valley and waited for the possible advent of two young people who might have forgotten that there was such a thing as time.

But presently he smiled. They were in sight, wandering along beside the river, and walking like lovers with arms entwined. The man was looking down into the face of the girl, while she was gazing into the greenness of this tranquil world.

The Professor arose and filled the teapot. He stood at the doorway of the caravan.

"Hallo! Does anybody want tea?"

They turned towards him, still holding together.

"Because I do."

They came. Both faces smiled up at him with a serious, shining happiness.

"Professor, my dream has come true."

The Professor and the Hermit

(20)

by
WARWICK DEEPING

IN June Professor Fothergill received a letter written in the queer and nervous hand of a man whom he had not seen for five years.

"DEAR FATHER IGNATIUS,—With you a promise remains a promise. Will you come and see an old man who is dying.

"ENOCH BASKERVILLE."

The weather was wet, and when the green caravan made Minster Lovel in the wind and the rain of a disastrous June, the Professor turned the grey horse into the yard of the Beauchamp Arms. The stable man dealt with the grey horse, while Fothergill interviewed the lady in the office, a bothered yet pleasant young person.

"I'm sorry, sir, but we haven't a single bedroom vacant."

"Nothing?"

"We are full up."

"Can you feed me for a day or two? I can sleep in my caravan."

"Oh, we can do that, sir."

"Good."

The Professor saw that his caravan was parked in a quiet and cleanly corner of the yard, and the grey horse well stalled, before he set out to walk to Lovel Park. The rain was still coming down, but under the western edge of the clouds the sun was showing a gleam of gold, and as the Professor passed one of the bow windows of the Beauchamp Arms his quick eyes observed a group of people in it. A bored man, with a vacant and self-indulgent face, was standing with his hands in his pockets staring at the puddles. Behind him another man was talking to two women who had books on their knees. In one corner of the big Georgian window a young girl sat apart, her elbows on the sill, her face close to the glass. She had an olive skin and dark eyes, and somehow she made the Caravaner think of a moping, wild creature shut up in a glass case.

The sun was shining when he reached the stone lodge and saw the grey-green curves of the great oak ring-fence spreading

its barrier about the sanctuary of the park, for a sanctuary it was, sacred to those wild things, creatures of fur and of feather, the beloved friends of that most eccentric of men, Enoch Baskerville. The park was superb, its oaks and beeches and old Scotch firs flashing their wet green splendour above the rolling grass and bracken. Fothergill had to ring the lodge bell, for the solid gates with their *chevaux de frise* were locked.

A woman opened one leaf of the gate.

"What may you be wanting?"

"I have come to see Mr. Baskerville."

"What name?"

"Fothergill."

She wasted no words. The name was an "open sesame," and she let him in, and closed and locked the gate behind him. The Professor walked slowly through the park towards the great house, with its white Ionic portico. There was much for him to gaze upon—beauty of life, the spacious vistas, the woods and groups of trees, the wild yet unwilld creatures whose home it was. He saw deer grazing, and a string of them going down to one of the lakes to drink. Two swans were flying around with heavy solemnity. Exultant cries and quackings came from the water. A little gazelle, moving like a shadow on its delicate, gossamer legs, trotted up close to him and gazed with soft eyes.

The Professor stood quite still, smiling, and holding out a hand, and after a few shy tentative sniffings the gazelle came close and licked his fingers.

"No one has ever hurt you, you pretty thing. You were born in Eden."

A man-servant unlocked the door to the Professor. The man was neat, compact, intelligent, with supercilious eyebrows, and a politely ironical manner. He looked at Professor Fothergill as though he were remarking to himself, "Here is another of them." He filled the doorway, and his strong and compact figure was not to be cajoled.

"You have forgotten me, Bond."

THE QUIVER

The man smiled very slightly.

"No, sir, not now, sir. But there are such a lot of them, sir. Mr. Baskerville expects you."

"I was sorry to hear the news."

Bond retained his dry look.

"He is in bed, Mr. Fothergill. I'll take you up."

In the broad, sunny room the Professor found Mr. Baskerville in bed. He had a head of snow, rosy cheeks, and a pair of bright dark eyes, eyes that were wicked and humorous and lovable. There was something birdlike about him. From the four-poster bed he extended a lean hand.

"Ha! So you keep your promises."

Fothergill smiled, and sat down on the chair beside the bed. A blue Persian lay curled up on the quilt, and an Aberdeen growled with friendly gruffness from a basket under the window, but these animals seemed to know that no enemy creature would be admitted into this quiet room.

"Yes, I try to keep my promises."

"That is why I sent for you. I thought that you were the sort of person to help me to keep mine."

They regarded each other, and then Mr. Baskerville broke into an elvish chuckle.

"Well, Ignatius, are you at the Beauchamp Arms?"

"There, but not exactly in it. I shall have to sleep in my van."

"Full, is it?"

"Apparently."

"Ha! They are all there! My dear relatives. Sisters! I had five sisters. Yes, there will be Joshua and Mary Isherwood, and the Sugdens, and Cousin Barnabas, dear Rebecca, and the Pankridges, the irreproachable Pankridges! You see, I am supposed to be dying."

"You don't look like it."

"I'm not. I'm good for another five years. But I have a sense of responsibility."

"To your relations?"

"Dear people! How they hate each other! The fact is, Fothergill, I have always taken a devilish delight in setting them by the ears. Dear Enoch's money! They have been laying siege to this place. They are so affectionate. They try to bribe Bond. Dear Rebecca even tried to get in at the pantry window. Luckily, I have a doctor who has a sense of humour."

The Professor nodded a grave head.

"So, it is a game. It might be a rather cruel game."

Mr. Baskerville's eyes flashed. He sat up in bed.

"Fothergill, do you love humans?"

"Some of them."

"I don't. You know my history. My friends have been the animals. And here is this pack of wolves ready to fight on my doorstep. Money."

"So, the thing that is worrying you is, how to leave your money?"

"Yes—and no. They have always fawned, but I could hear the sneers, "Old Enoch and his menagerie." Tap their foreheads, you know. I am playing my own game with the lot of them. I lured them down here. I want to find out if there is one decent, disinterested, undebauched soul——"

The Professor saw light.

"You are thinking of your animals?"

"Exactly. The creatures I love, the creatures who have given me love and friendship, who look on me as a brother animal, a queer old comrade in trousers. Their world is my world. And I tell you, Fothergill, I had to face the fact that one day I should have to die and leave all these dear friends of mine to some utilitarian beast. My will—yes! Legal protection! Slaughtermen busy. Savages with guns. Cleaning up a silly old man's foolishness. Blood, the blood of things I love. No. I want someone who would give these creatures love. And among my wretched relations, is there one? Yet, I am a just beast; I thought that I would give them the chance. And that is why I asked you here."

The Professor nodded.

"Then, you wish me——?"

"To discriminate. They don't know you from Adam. Go down and observe them. Feel—them. Oh, you know what I mean."

"I do. But it is perilously like spying."

"It is spying. Does God never spy? I am thinking of my wild things. Would it be fair to leave these friends of mine to people—merciless and selfish—full of civilized selfishness?"

"No."

"Good. Well, go down and do this for me: See if there is love to be found. You can trust Bond. But when you come up and see me, come up after dark. Don't let the sly people suspect."

"Is Bond unimpeachable?"

"I have made him so. He inherits a comfortable sum, but only on the under-

standing that no relative of mine gets inside this house."

It was the memory of the little gazelle licking his fingers that persuaded the Caravaner to accept this strange trust, and to go down and consort with Mr. Baskerville's relatives. He met them all at dinner, or, rather, he dined in the midst of them at a little table in the centre of the room, and having a big mirror in front of him, he had a view of the tables behind his back. It was an absurd situation. Mr. Baskerville's relatives must have numbered a baker's dozen, and the Professor observed them. Each group sat at a separate table, and he divined the polite hostility between the groups. Miss Rebecca Baskerville, a formidable old woman with a hooked nose and black eyes, sat alone by the fireplace. The Isherwoods and Cousin Barnabas had a table by the window. Isherwood yawned and drank pale ale; his wife and Cousin Barnabas flirted like a couple of faded paroquets. The girl—Grace—looked with restive and disapproving eyes at her relatives or gazed out of the window. The Sugdens provided the loud and modern element, in contrast to the nice Pankridges. Mr. Pankridge wore a dinner jacket and a white shirt, and his pale wife exhibited refinement in French grey.

The Professor had the Pankridges on his right. They had glanced at him suspiciously, and with an air of stately and gracious impressiveness he asked to be allowed to borrow the bottle of sauce that stood on the Pankridge table.

"Certainly, sir."

Mr. Pankridge passed the sauce bottle, and an informal introduction was accomplished.

They indulged in refined chatter, and Mrs. Pankridge displayed her culture to the rest of the Baskerville relatives. She was a very cultivated person, cold as a fish, and nicely vain.

"I hear that Lovel Hall is a very fine Adam house. Can you tell me whether it can be visited?"

The whole room pricked its ears and listened for Mrs. Pankridge's answer.

"Not just at present. The owner is very ill. And he is a little——"

Mr. Pankridge gave his wife a meaning look.

"A little autocratic. Rather refreshing in these days, I think."

The one face in the room that interested Professor Fothergill was the face of the

Isherwood girl at the table in the window. She had the air of not belonging to her parents. She looked unhappy, a caged thing, sensitively rebellious; moreover, she reminded the Caravaner of her eccentric, swift-eyed uncle. There was a something in the eyes.

Fothergill went out to smoke his pipe in the garden, and perhaps to make contact with other members of the Baskerville circle, and happening to pass a dilapidated summer-house he heard the Sugden family sitting in council. They had aggressive voices; they were discussing the situation and the eccentricities of Mr. Enoch. Mrs. Sugden was asserting that she did not trust the doctor, that there might be a conspiracy between him and that impertinent fellow Bond.

"They have got the old fool shut up there. How do we know that they haven't persuaded him into making a disgraceful will? How do we know that Enoch has been fit to make a will?"

"Well, I saw his lawyers."

"And they refused to say anything. It is my opinion that we ought to take a strong line, John. We ought to force our way into the house, and insist on seeing that old lunatic."

"Yes, all very well; but supposing we found him a little more sane than you allow? We should be in good odour, shouldn't we?"

"I don't agree. We ought to take action. I believe Rebecca would join us."

"Well, talk it over with her."

In the course of twenty-four hours the Caravaner had come by a fairly just appreciation of the characters of the people concerned. There was nothing lovable about any of them, with one possible exception, and Fothergill could understand old Baskerville's hatred of the whole crowd and the delight he had taken in keeping them outside his ring fence. He could hear them speaking mockingly of the "Menagerie," and it seemed to Fothergill pretty obvious that the old man's "beloved friends" would not receive much mercy from these relatives. And the Caravaner, sensitive to the civilized selfishness of each individual, declared himself on the side of the animals.

"Baskerville is right, utterly right. The menagerie would be turned into venison and game."

The Professor had owed many of his successes to fortunate coincidences, and in this case he happened upon one of these

THE QUIVER

happy chances. Between tea and dinner he had gone for a ramble through the half-open woodlands surrounding Lovel Park, and about a hundred yards from one of the

childlike solemnity. The girl was holding out her hands and making soft, alluring noises.

Suddenly, one of the creatures walked slowly up to her and suffered itself to be caressed. The others followed, and the Caravaner had a vision of the girl surrounded by these graceful heads. He saw her with her arms round two of the brown necks, a young Diana in Arcady.

At dinner there was no Grace Isherwood. She came in half-way through the meal, slightly flushed, and suppressing some happy exultation behind a defensive casualness. She was scolded.

"Where—have—you been?"

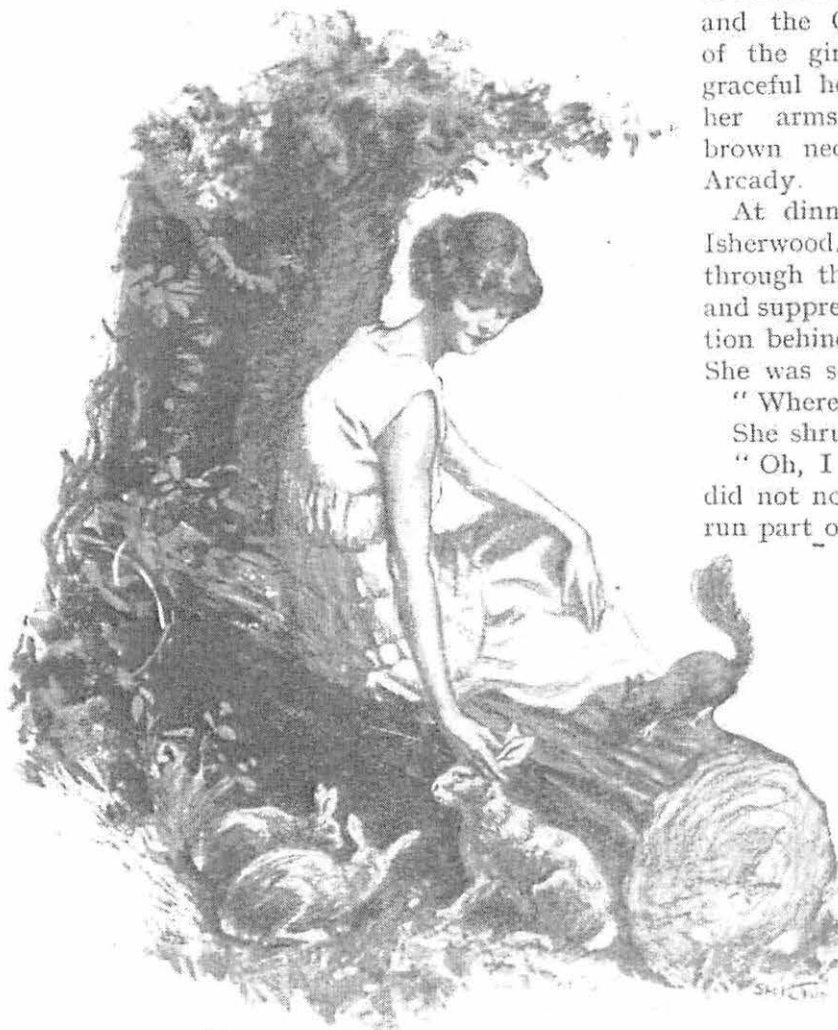
She shrugged off the attack.

"Oh, I went for a walk, and I did not notice the time. I had to run part of the way back."

"Run? Young ladies don't run in public."

"Oh, don't they!" murmured the Professor. "You are twenty years behind the times, Mrs. Isherwood."

On the following day he concealed himself in the park, and again Miss Isherwood climbed the fence and ran gently wild among old Enoch's friends. Squirrels came to her, and a brown-



A brown-eyed hare loped up and suffered her to caress its ears

Drawn by
C. P. Shilton

old bricked-up gates he caught a long-legged girl scrambling over the high oak fence. She was so intent upon her scramble that she did not see Professor Fothergill, but the incident was too suggestive for the Caravaner to refrain from following it up.

Fothergill climbed the fence.

He had lost her for the moment, but pushing his way through the underwood, and out into the glow of a serene June evening, he saw a sight that made him crouch down among the fern. Below him lay a little green valley surrounded by old trees, and in the bottom of this green hollow Grace Isherwood and some half a dozen fallow deer were gazing at each other with

eyed hare loped up and suffered her to caress its ears. She wandered with the deer, and became the comrade of the Shetland ponies and the Highland cattle. She did not go near the house, but, like a shy, wild thing, kept to the more solitary regions.

The Professor shadowed her like some smiling sylvan god.

"No ulterior motive here. Just love going out to things that are lovable."

That evening he missed his dinner, for instead of returning to Beauchamp Arms, he made his way across the sunset park and up to the house with its white portico. Bond let him in. Yes, Mr. Baskerville was still

in bed, but the doctor took a less serious view of his condition!

The old man's eager head showed up against the sunset.

"Well, Ignatius, how do you like my relatives?"

"To be frank——"

"As little as I do! Ha, I thought you would have no luck at the Beauchamp Arms."

Fothergill sat down.

"But I am a rather lucky person. Things happen—under my nose. I have found an interesting specimen in your park. I suppose you would not feel equal to a little stroll to-morrow?"

Mr. Baskerville's keen eyes twinkled.

"I think so. But what is this specimen?"

"I would prefer you to study it for yourself. It comes out to play between tea and dinner. I think I know where it is most likely to be found."

"It has two legs?"

"Yes, I think it has two legs. We shall have to conceal ourselves. I imagine it is rather shy."

And so it came about that Mr. Baskerville and the Professor hid themselves in a thicket on the edge of the green hollow where Grace Isherwood had first met the fallow deer. There were a dozen of the creatures, couchant, or wandering among the bracken, and in getting to their lurking-place old Baskerville had shown all a gillie's cunning. He had some sort of perfume which he used, and he made Fothergill share some of it.

"They would know that I was about. Most of these creatures know the smell of me."

He was excited. They lay in the bracken on the edge of the thicket, and waited, and Fothergill kept his eyes on a narrow green alley-way that led towards the ring fence. If Grace Isherwood followed her previous adventures she would make her appearance through that green cleft in the foliage.

She came. And all her movements had a graceful wildness. She was a creature that danced, free and unselfconscious. She went down into the green hollow, calling to the deer, stretching out her hands to them. And the creatures came to her; she was one of them, fondling and being fondled, her white dress half hidden by the brown bodies and the graceful hands.

Mr. Baskerville was intensely excited, and the Caravaner had to restrain him.

"Man, it's a miracle! Who is she?"

Where has she come from? Why has not God given me a child like that?"

"Ask Him."

"But where has she dropped from?"

"She comes from the Beauchamp Arms."

"What!"

"Her name is Grace Isherwood. She is your niece."

Old Baskerville clutched Fothergill's arm.

"An Isherwood! Man, is she real? Does she know?"

"She runs away from her parents and comes here in secret. I caught her scrambling over the fence two days ago. She comes to play with your friends."

Enoch Baskerville knelt in the bracken, and his face was transfigured.

"Fothergill, there is my heiress, my successor. I believe in a god, because I love these creatures. Man, but I must be sure. They might have sent her here."

"I think not."

That evening there was conceived a delightful little Arcadian comedy, and Mr. Baskerville chuckled over it and snapped his fingers, and had he begun to leap like a dancing Faun, the Caravaner would not have been surprised by it. "I'll borrow some of old Thomson's clothes. Yes, that's it. I'll catch her at it—trespassing. I shall be very severe, with a twinkle in my eye. Fothergill, you are an extraordinary beggar at getting at the inwardness of things."

"I was born with a smile."

"And an eye in the back of your soul."

The Professor went back to his dinner, and watched with secret amusement the gathering of Enoch's affectionate relatives. Miss Rebecca looked grimmer than ever. The Sugdens exchanged sly glances, as though some shrewd plot had been arranged. Isherwood yawned and drank his pale ale; his wife scolded the daughter for having torn her dress. The refined Pankridges opened a discussion on Lowestoft china, and were careful to emphasize the e. Lowestoft. It set them apart on a nice shelf by themselves.

And Fothergill wanted to behave like a parrot, and shout "Rats, rats" over his fried sole.

He saw old Enoch set forth next day in a box-cloth coat, breeches and black leggings. He carried an ash stick, and wore an old bowler hat with a curly brim crammed on the back of his head. He was "parker," ranger, gamekeeper, what you please, and his heart beat like a boy's.

THE QUIVER

It was among the beeches near Thorn Lodge that Baskerville surprised his niece. She had found the deer here in a little glade, and the deer discovered Mr. Baskerville before Grace Isherwood was aware of the nearness of a stranger. There was a sudden excitement among the beasts; she found herself deserted; the deer were trotting off towards an old man in a fawn-coloured coat; she saw them crowd about him, sniffing at his clothes and rubbing gently against him. Also, she realized that she was caught.

But she did not take to her heels. She stood quite still, gazing, and the old man and his bevy of brown beasts drew down on her. She thought that he looked severe.

"Well, young lady, I've caught ye, have I? Trespassin'. What be ye doin' here?"

"I'm doing no harm," she said.

"Ha, no harm! That be'nt the question. I guess Mr. Baskerville would be powerful angry."

He watched her sensitive eyes, and allowed her a smile.

"I be Mr. Baskerville's keeper. Now, if you run away, p'raps I'll say nothin' about it. Pretty creatures, be'nt they?"

She stood gazing upon him.

"But—I love them. Won't you let me come again? I shall not be able to come much longer. And I am sure Mr. Baskerville would not mind. Besides——"

The old man looked sly.

"Ha, you are thinkin' of him dyin'."

"No, I'm not. If he loves these dear things——"

"Well, and what if 'e does?"

"He would miss them—and they might miss him. I think Mr. Baskerville must be—rather a dear old man."

The keeper fondled one of the does.

"Oh, you do, do ye! Well, I've known he a good many years, and he loves every bird and beast in the place. Calls them his friends—his children. And they are happy, you see, and gentle, and not afraid."

"They are not afraid of Mr. Baskerville."

"Not they."

"Then I'm not afraid of him. You may tell him I come here—because I love his birds and animals. And if he wants to be angry——"

"What's your name, young lady?"

"Isherwood—Grace Isherwood."

"Maybe—I'll say nothing about it. Where do you live?"

"We are at the Beauchamp Arms. It's horrible, you know. My mother and father,

and all my aunts and uncles. But, of course, I ought not to say this to you."

"I be'nt no gossip. And I think I know what all the ladies and gen'lemen are waitin' for. They be waitin' for Mr. Baskerville to die."

She nodded.

"Yes; don't you think it horrible?"

"It's human nature," said the old man.

Mr. Baskerville returned to the hall, and to the Professor, in a state of exultation.

"I caught her. Oh, yes, I wasn't too severe. I let on she might come again and that I would say nothing about it—to myself. Fothergill, she's clean. She has got eyes like a deer. God might have made her for this place."

The Professor smiled.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"Mr. Baskerville is going to stay in bed, while old Thomson goes around and plays with the girl. I'm Thomson. And at the end of a week I can see Mr. Baskerville making a remarkable recovery. Wait. There is one thing you may be able to tell me."

"Well?"

"The Isherwoods. Are they very fond of the girl?"

"I should say that they are people who are incapable of being fiercely fond of anything save—pardon the cynicism—themselves."

"Supposing I were to adopt her?"

"Supposing you proposed to remember them in your will?"

"Yes, my dear sir, money can do most things with most people."

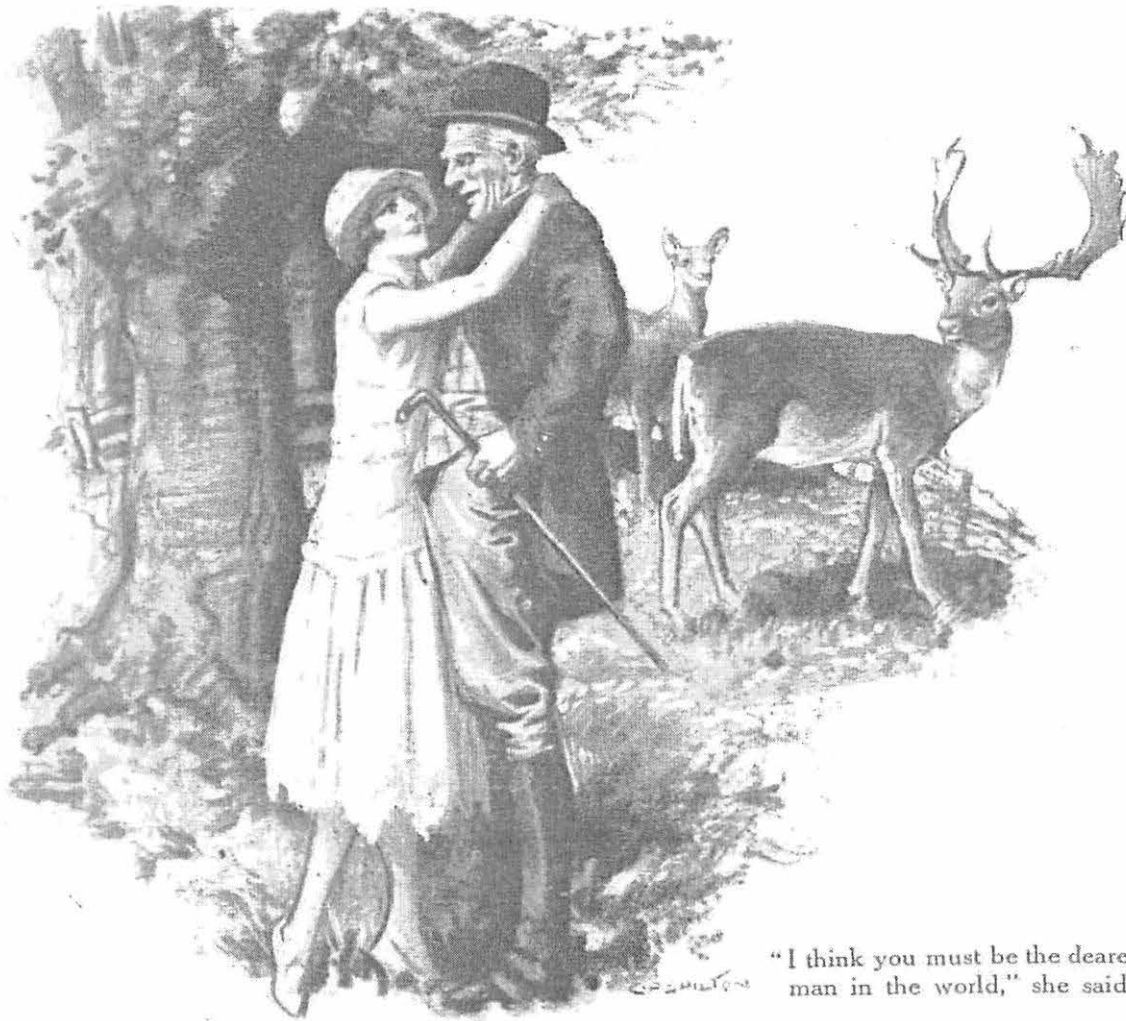
For a week Mr. Enoch Baskerville posed as his own keeper, and, meeting Grace Isherwood each day, created with her a quaint conspiracy. He was mysterious, sly, playful. "Mr. Baskerville be in bed, miss. Maybe, I'll take ye down to the lake to-morrow." He trudged about with this young girl, who politely called him "Mr. Thomson," and thought him a most wonderful person. And so he was, and she in her enthusiasm and her wild love of this gentle world became as wonderful to him as were any of his beloved friends.

At the end of the week he asked her a question.

"My dear, how would you like to live here?"

He saw her breath quiver

"Live here? Why, I daren't think about it. I have got to go back to Surbiton."



"I think you must be the dearest man in the world," she said

"But supposing Mr. Baskerville asked you to come and live here?"

"But how could he? I have never seen him."

"Oh—yes—you have."

"When?"

"You are looking at him now."

"You? But you are Mr. Thomson."

"That was a game, my dear, and I apologize to you for playing it. I am your Uncle Enoch."

"But—I—I thought——"

"Dying? No, not yet! Well, will you come and live with me and love my animals with me. They will want you, you know, after I am dead."

Her impulsive arms went round his neck.

"I think you must be the dearest man in the world."

Her uncle laughed, and kissed her.

"I suppose that means—yes."

Professor Fothergill witnessed the consummation of this little romance, for into the dining-room of the Beauchamp Arms walked an old gentleman and a girl, holding

each other's hands. The old gentleman had a sardonic but happy look, and he appeared to enjoy the sensation his sudden appearance caused.

Mr. Baskerville smiled and greeted them.

"Well, Rebecca. You look younger than ever, Mary. Barnabas, my dear fellow. Good evening, my dear Sylvia."

He walked across with his niece to the Isherwood table.

"Yes, I'm feeling much better. I think I could eat a little dinner. May I join you, Isherwood? Thanks. You see, Grace and I have found that we both like menageries."

Fothergill sat and enjoyed the scene, and before going to his caravan that night he heard the Sugdens unloading their emotion.

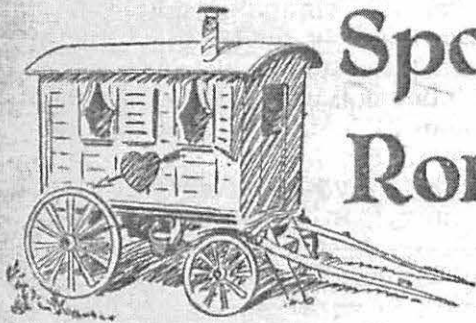
"Well, I should never have thought Jack Isherwood had the cunning——"

"Pah!" said the wife; "he hasn't. You can put it down to Mary. She was always as sly as they make them."

The Professor spread his arms, looked at the stars, and went, smiling, to the green caravan.

THE CORNER OCT 19 1926

The Professor Spoils a Romance



(21)

By WARWICK DEEPING

THE PROFESSOR IN THE CARAVAN—THE BOUNDER— THE BUBBLE PRICKED

THE Professor turned the head of the grey horse towards Kingsmere, and dropping down into the green valley, pulled up outside the white gate of Folly Farm. A broad, brown-faced man who had been watching a thatcher at work upon a haystack, came out to welcome the green caravan with its sign of a red heart and an arrow of gold.

"Well, Mr. Ensor, here I am again."

"Very pleased to see you, sir."

"May I spread myself in the corner of the field—by the pond?"

"Go wherever you please, sir."

"Jericho is out of bounds! How is your wife keeping?"

The farmer gave the caravaner a significant smile.

"Making jam, sir. She has been her old self ever since you picked that religious bee out of her bonnet."

"That's good. And how are they all at 'Bassets'? Is Mrs. Ducie at home?"

The farmer pushed his hat on to the back of his head, opened the white gate, and climbing up beside Mr. Fothergill, appeared interested in the grey horse.

"Will you drive in, sir? The old horse looks the same as ever."

The Professor drove in, and steered for the paddock where his camping-ground waited for him beside the green fringes of the willows. He, too, was waiting for Mr. Ensor to answer his question, but the farmer was a deliberate person, and deliberation suggested a native wisdom.

"Mrs. Ducie is at home, sir. I think she may be glad to see you."

"Business or pleasure, Mr. Ensor?"

"A bit of both, sir, if I may be allowed to say so."

"O, what is the trouble? You are a man of sense, Mr. Ensor."

"I think young Mr. Phill is the trouble, sir. And a fellow named Haddock, and Miss Phyllis. But it is none of my business. You will be going up to 'Bassets,' sir. Can I send you down some milk and eggs?"

"I shall be very glad of them."

"And a few strawberries. My lad shall fetch the horse. Give the lad any orders you like, sir."

"You are a very good host, Mr. Ensor."

"Put it this way, sir: I'm one of those who don't forget."

This green corner of the world where the pollarded willows made a gentle shimmering about the Folly Farm pond, and the Basset woods climbed steeply skyward, was one of the caravaner's most beloved haunts. It spoke of peace and of quiet meditation, and with its long silences or the play of the wind in the willows it gave to the caravaner's thoughts a depth and a gentleness. He forgave the road-hogs their dust and their hoggishness. He was able to overleap the mud-splash of an unlovely generation, and arrive at those hypothetical green futures when man shall have ceased to be a political beast, and motor-bicycles have shed their smell. He built his fire and hung his kettle over it, and watched the drifting smoke spread soft and evanescent shadows on the foliage of the willows. He made his tea and drank it, and lay prone, filling a pipe. It was five o'clock, and the spirit moved him to go up to "Bassets."

Mrs. Angela Ducie was at home. The caravaner liked Angela Ducie as well as he had liked any woman since the death of his dear comrade, even though he recognised her charming foolishness—and

her generousities that were too sensitive and self-effacing. He found her alone, snipping off the dead roses in the walled garden. She was glad to see him, and her gladness seemed to come out of a little cage of worry and botherment, and fluttered its wings. For a woman of the world she was as transparent as an April sky.

"I was just wishing you were here."

"That is a very delightful wish, dear lady," and his eyes added: "Something is worrying you rather badly. I shall have to pick a very serious quarrel with that something."

They wandered about the most delightful of gardens where Mrs. Angela's roses and her herbaceous borders made the caravaner forget to light his pipe. She was quick to remind him that he was allowed to smoke, and when his wise eyes twinkled over the suggestion that tobacco was necessary in such a place, she rose to the inevitableness of him. She was tired. She made a movement towards the oak seat set back in a bay of the yew hedge. Not only did she wish to sit, but she desired to lay her troubles on the Professor's knees. He was the kind of man you told things to, just as though by telling them you got out of the shadows and into the sun.

"You always seem to arrive at the psychological moment."

He sat down beside her.

"Well—I am a psychologist. I like problems, live problems."

"I wish you would solve mine."

"I could attempt it. But sometimes I fail."

"Do you? I can never picture you failing."

"Dear lady, what sort of detestable prig should I be—"

She gave a slight shake of the head.

"No. Well, I will tell you. I will ask you to judge. I have always set myself an ideal, the ideal of a woman of understanding. As a mother, I wanted to understand my children, to be a pal to them, not to crab them in any way."

"I know that."

"You have met Phill. He is in his third year at Oxford. He got into a rather advanced set there, the new Utopians. Well—that's youth, is it not? You and I know that youth has to have its Utopias. I did not argue or interfere; I gave Phill his head, but I did not foresee the man—Haddock."

"An amphibious creature!"

He sensed in her a rebellious and disinterested disgust, the revolt of the

intuitive woman against something that was vaguely unclean.

"Yes, slime. I can't help it. This Haddock is what Phill calls a 'tremendous fellow.'"

"One moment. There is a young man called Clive Haddock who writes what I consider to be particularly nasty books. Clever, o—yes. What the little fellows in London call literature. Is this the same fish?"

She nodded.

"That's the man. I suppose he is what you would describe as a 'Communist.' He has been in Russia. I daresay Lenin is quite a pleasant person, but Haddock met Lenin—"

"I see. And now the very name of Lenin—excuse me—stinks like stale fish!"

Her eyes flickered humorously, and then grew grave.

"How quick you are. I suppose it is prejudice; I have nothing definite against the man."

"Save that you can't swallow him."

"Yes, just that. Last vacation Phill asked him to stay. He came. I saw at once that he had gained an extraordinary influence over Phill. He can talk, he is a quite brilliant talker. Have you ever seen people made drunk with words?"

The Professor's face was serious.

"Have I not! Bad words and good words. And is the fish man here now?"

"He has been here a whole month. You see, with Phill it did not matter so seriously, though he has been trying to start a Soviet in the village. He has the reform fever; but he will get over it. But when Phyllis—"

The caravaner shook his mane.

"Has my little Phyllis—"

"You know what the child is—impressionable, generous, full of ideals. Somehow—it is quite horrible to me, like a snake and a bird."

"Has it happened?"

"No. But it is just on the edge of happening, and when such things happen how helpless we are! We rush to save a child from the fire, only to be thrust off. They insist on being burnt. And then—the afterwards."

The Professor nodded.

"You cannot understand the child caring?"

"O, yes, I can. But the woman in me—the woman of the world—cannot understand. What I mean is, every fibre in me loathes the man. I can feel and see all that a girl can neither feel nor see. If only—"

Fothergill felt for his pipe.

"Exactly. I rely on your sense of smell. To put it vulgarly, if the child's spiritual nostrils could be made— You take me? But let us be fair. The chap may be disinterested."

Her sudden fierceness surprised him.

"Disinterested! Is sex ever disinterested? Besides, he is not quite a man, somehow—not like our ideas of a man. And then, Phyllis is twenty, and at twenty-one she comes in to her Aunt Sophia's money. Five hundred a year."

"Does your friend know that?"

"I cannot be sure."

"But a gentleman named Haddock with Bolshevik proclivities should be above—"

"Don't," she said; "it is too serious."

"Dear lady, pardon me, but too much seriousness is bad diplomacy. The wag who said 'Hee-haw' to the eloquent prig had more success than if he had tried to argue with him. Now, I want to meet Mr. Clive Haddock. Where are they all?"

"Tennis—over at the Hoods."

"Does Mr. Haddock play tennis?"

"No. He has only one pair of flannel trousers, grey ones, and they need washing. O, my dear man, what a beast I am!"

"Not in the least. You are a woman and a mother. Ask me to dinner."

"Yes, you will be able to judge."

"I want to stay as I am—in these yellow flannels."

"I leave it to you."

"I shall wear no tie."

"Very well."

"I may make a noise with my soup. My manners may appear a little large and frowsy."

Her soft amber-coloured eyes were questioning.

"Really! Oh, I see; I think I see. I leave it all to you."

Professor Fothergill brought an element of unexpectedness to the Ducie dinner-table. They foregathered in the veranda, and here the caravaner had a few moments with the Ducie women before the two young men appeared. He was expansive and a little noisy, and so much an original that he found the bright, dark eyes of Phyllis Ducie veiling a critical surprise. She was a pretty thing, like a dark pansy, all velvet and enthusiasm, with a mouth that quickly became plaintive, and it betrayed some plaintiveness under the Professor's energetics. She thought him most extraordinarily changed, loud and rather familiar. He teased her and looked sly but wholly approving, and his genial clowning was such that she could neither

acquit him of foolishness nor suspect him of guile.

Phill Ducie arrived, shyly aggressive.

"Hallo, Professor!"

His glance hovered about Fothergill's unbuttoned, tieless collar. Was it a trap, or jest, or an insult?

"Hallo, young fellow-my-lad! I believe you have grown."

"I hope so—"

"Intellectual stature, what! I hear you have picked up a celebrity. I'm intrigued."

Young Ducie regarded him with puzzled mistrust, being unable to fathom the Professor's sea of boisterous benignity. To apply the epithet of "fathead" to a professor of psychology appeared irreverent and revolutionary. And then Mr. Clive Haddock strolled out on to the veranda two minutes after the gong had sounded.

The caravaner absorbed him with one observant glance, a little dark man with a ruff of hair and cold eyes in an impertinent and pasty face. He came on smiling like a popular actor taking the stage ready for the applause. He had all the superciliousness and the cold vanity of a cat, but none of a cat's cleanness.

Mrs. Ducie introduced them.

"Mr. Haddock—Professor Fothergill."

The Professor showed great geniality. One of his large hands swallowed Haddock's little fist.

"I am very pleased to meet you. I have been extraordinarily interested in your books."

"I think I can say the same. But I disagree with some of your social theories, Mr. Fothergill."

The caravaner smiled.

"We'll debate my theories some time. I should like to hear your views."

Mrs. Ducie was puzzled, for during dinner Professor Fothergill and Clive Haddock got on excellently well. The novelist talked, and the Professor talked back at him with playful lightness, seemingly blind to one or two pieces of intellectual impertinence. He suffered himself to be snubbed when he had introduced Bergson, and was told that the great Henri was a back number. The dinner remained with the fish. And the caravaner, buxom, smiling, full of seductive and sweet appreciativeness held the sauceboat for Clive Haddock, and instilled into the atmosphere a deadly perfume of suggestive flattery. Phillip Ducie was a mere small boy hanging on to the tail of the conversational procession. His mother sat, vaguely smiling.

The girl was all ears and eyes, a pansy turning its face to the sunlight.

The caravaner became a Falstaff. He was jovial, unbuttoned, somewhat crude and expansive in his manners. When they rose from the table he had a spiritual arm round Haddock's shoulders. They were warm with words.

"I should like to discuss epigenesis with you. Now, it seems to me——"

They strolled out into the garden.

"Only—we should be boring our hostess."

He caught Haddock in a sneer.

"Does it matter? Some people are born to be bored."

"Inevitable—what!"

"This house amuses me. It has what I call a beautifully balanced digestion and no brain."

"I don't think I quite agree with you, my dear fellow. I fancy I observed a certain person appreciating your arguments."

Haddock sleeked himself with a smile.

"Yes, she has possibilities. Rather a charming little person."

The Professor gave him a playful pat on the shoulder.

* * * * *

At ten o'clock Fothergill rose to go. He beamed upon Clive Haddock.

"I hope you are not leaving just yet. You must come and see my caravan."

Angela Ducie accompanied him into the moonlit garden.

"A very remarkable man, a most remarkable man," said the Professor with enthusiastic loudness, knowing that his voice would penetrate to the drawing-room.

"I am glad you think so!"

They had crossed the swathed silver of the grass and were at the end of the nut walk leading to the orchard gate.

"A little too remarkable for your taste, I think."

"Yes."

"And for mine."

She looked at him doubtfully.

"Yet you were very pleasant to the fellow. You let him snub you——"

"Why not?"

He gave a deep and vibrant laugh.

"He thinks me quite a pleasant, informal codger, rather hairy and well greased—like one of his pet Russians. Well—well; I agree with you."

"But what am I to do? If I try opposition——"

"Fatal. A little strategy. If you will

allow me—I will think it over. I may be able to remove this vermiform appendix."

Three days passed, and the caravaner's grasp of the situation grew more firm and sympathetic. Clive Haddock came down to the Folly Pool and lay on his back under the willows and talked, and the Professor sat and absorbed him. Up at Bassets the son of the house had fallen into a sudden inexplicable moodiness. He was a sensitive instrument, and Mrs. Ducie's touch was light. To a brother a sister may seem a somewhat sexless creature, but Phillip Ducie had been made suddenly aware of the sex in his sister and the thing had shocked him. Why, he could not say. There was no human reason why the "tremendous fellow" should not kiss his sister——

"Mater, I'm a bit worried. I feel responsible."

"But, your very dear friend, Phill!"

The son betrayed a significant restiveness.

"I don't know about that."

"But, my dear Phill, I thought——"

"Yes, I know. He is a remarkable beggar—brilliant, and all that, and he can talk like a prize prophet—but the fact is——"

"Well——?"

"The fact is, he doesn't wash."

The romance was trembling on the edge of the precipice when a big primrose-coloured car pulled up at Folly Farm and a tall fellow with quiet blue eyes and a face the colour of a brown egg climbed out and inquired for Professor Fothergill.

"My name is Fothergill. Yes, I'm his nephew, one of them. Is there any corner where I can garage the car?"

Mr. Ensor, welcoming anything of the name of Fothergill, offered standing room in his big waggon-shed, and pointed out the green caravan. Mr. Fothergill thanked him, and lugging a valise and kit bag out of the car set off stalwartly for the caravaner's camping-ground.

He found the Professor asleep on the grass.

"Hallo, uncle!"

"Hallo, Jack, my lad! Delighted to see you."

Young Fothergill dumped his burdens.

"I got your letter yesterday morning. I can manage a week. Nothing the matter?"

"I was feeling a bit lonesome, and I fancied a tonic."

"Am I the tonic?"

"You are."

"Thanks. That's some compliment. What about tea? I'll make it."

So John Fothergill, the Professor's favourite nephew, Oxford "blue," "honours" man, with something of a career before him in the great steel works of Fothergill & Son, joined his beloved uncle in the life of the green caravan. He had a wise head, much muscle, and a quiet and delightful laugh. In fact, he was what the caravaner called "A thoroughly wholesome, sound and hygienic person, clean with the best sort of English cleanness."

The caravaner mentioned "Bassets" and the Ducies, but he concealed Clive Haddock. He fancied that he could leave that gentleman to John Fothergill's sense of smell.

"Got tennis things with you?"

"Yes; I shoved in a racket."

"Good."

They strolled up to "Bassets" on the following afternoon, arriving in the midst of a tennis party, and John Fothergill met the Ducies. He approved of them and they approved of him. He was put on as Phyllis's partner in a mixed doubles, and seeing that he had survived two rounds in the open singles at Wimbledon he surprised the Arcadians.

Mrs. Ducie watched him with pleasure.

"Your nephew is a very fine player."

"O, not so bad," said the Professor with comfortable serenity, and the corner of an eye on Clive Haddock.

For the fact was that John and Phyllis were combining excellently both as partners and as young things.

"I say, you are most awfully good, Mr. Fothergill."

Her dark eyes fluttered to his blue ones.

"I get a lot of practice, you know."

He had that happy, unvain naturalness that appeals to women, and his smile was part of the game.

Professor Fothergill had been talking to Lady Hood when he became aware of John behind his chair, a John who was watching something with grave and combative eyes.

"I say, who is that chap there?"

"Which chap?"

"The fellow sitting by Miss Ducie?"

"That! O, that's Clive Haddock, author and social reformer."

"What, the chap that writes those filthy books!"

"They are supposed to be very brilliant books. It seems that he is inclined to marry Miss Ducie."

His nephew said nothing, and the uncle remarked on the excellence of the "Basset" turf.

Now Mr. Haddock had been rude to

John Fothergill, quite unnecessarily rude. Phyllis Ducie had introduced them at the end of the game, a slightly flushed and enthusiastic Phyllis.

"Mr. Fothergill is splendid."

And then the fish-man, thin lipped and venomous, had brought out an epigram that contained something witty about men and tennis balls with flannel covers.

The Professor had prepared his culture ground and he awaited developments while keeping tactful touch with Mrs. Ducie. The mother, mildest of women, was in a tigress mood. It appeared that Haddock had hinted to her with peculiarly offensive complacency that he found her daughter to his liking. Mrs. Angela sensitively raged, and the caravaner learnt from her raging that Phill Ducie had ceased to be a blind and enthusiastic disciple.

"My compliments to Phillip," said the Professor. "But can you tell me what it is, exactly, that has produced this natural nausea?"

"Well, the fact is, he says, that Mr. Haddock does not wash."

Fothergill's face grew whimsical and wicked.

"That fact is suggestive — most suggestive."

Presumably, the expression was meant to be symbolical, but the caravaner dealt with it as a realist. Two days went by, and it became obvious that tennis was much played at "Bassets," for John disappeared each afternoon. Also, it was to be inferred that he had fallen into violent competition with the fishmonger, the white man against the man of smears.

Professor Fothergill left the affair alone.

But when he did wander up to "Bassets" in the middle of the week he met a smile in Mrs. Angela's hazel eyes.

"I am so much obliged to you for John."

"I hope he is behaving himself?"

"O, quite nicely. There are some men who show up other men's bad manners. Mr. Haddock's manners have been — well——"

"Distinctly strong?"

"Yes, that describes them."

Then the wickedness of the caravaner planned a mischievous ambushade.

"John, my lad, how far is Mulworth Cave?"

"Oh, about thirty miles. Why?"

"I should like to bathe. Why not fill up your car with me, the two Ducies and the Haddock and drive us to Mulworth? We could take a picnic hamper."

John looked thoughtful.

"A great idea. But—I could dispose with the fish."

"No. We must take the fellow. You can leave him to me."

John Fothergill detected a serene slyness in his uncle's eyes.

"Seems rather unsporting, leaving you in Billingsgate."

"Not at all. I understand the language."

The expedition was arranged, and in the arranging of it there was some male by-play between John Fothergill and Phill Ducie. Mr. Haddock, aggressively sulky, was told nothing about bathing, but young Ducie saw to it that a bathing suit was prepared for him, stowed away with the others in the tool locker. John took his tent for Phyllis to use. Mrs. Ducie provided the luncheon hamper and wished them god-speed.

John drove and Phyllis Ducie sat beside him. The caravaner divided Clive and Phillip in a crowded back seat.

Mulworth welcomed them. It lay blue and serene in the embrace of its white cliffs with their green capping of turf, and since the lane that led to it was proof against char-a-bancs, a decent peace reigned. They left the car close to the fisherman's hut, and John carried his tent down to a strip of sand and proceeded to erect it.

Phill Ducie extracted bathing suits. The Professor had buttonholed Haddock, and was giving him a little lecture on life in the cretaceous era.

"Clive, here's your suit."

Ducie flung a ball of red stuff at Haddock, and the "tremendous fellow" caught it and so prevented the dress hitting him in the face.

"What's this?"

"Your bathing suit."

There was dubiousness in Haddock's eyes.

"But I don't swim."

"That's all right. It's quite safe. You can bump up and down like a girl."

"Thanks. But I don't bathe. It doesn't suit me."

Ducie gave him one glance and doubled off to help the others with the tent. The Professor heard blithe voices and a little laughter, while Clive Haddock looked savagely at the red bathing suit as though he did not know what to do with it.

The caravaner eyed him humorously.

"I'm afraid it will be rather dull for you. I am going in with the youngsters."

"I am never dull, my dear sir."

"Excellent. We shall probably go in again after lunch. Borrow a tin and shy stones at it."

They bathed. The Professor was a very powerful swimmer, and his tawny head led the youngsters out into the flickering blueness of the cove. John Fothergill kept close to Phyllis Ducie, protectively near to her, and she was conscious of his nearness and of its significance. Her brother was in a playful mood, cutting capers under their noses. Turning, they had a vision of Clive Haddock sitting solitary upon a shingle bank, the marooned "intellectual."

Young Ducie sent out a hail as they regained the shallows.

"Come on in, Haddock. It's quite warm."

Haddock remained coy.

"Well, come and paddle. That won't hurt you."

"I'm afraid," said someone, "that our friend is water-shy."

Presently they emerged, John Fothergill helping Phyllis Ducie over the shingle to the tent. Clothes were put on, and two young men with virile mops of hair went for the luncheon-basket. A queer and inarticulate sulkiness had fallen on Clive Haddock, and during lunch he sat a little apart absorbed in sulky meditation.

After lunch they lay and basked. John Fothergill lit Phyllis Ducie's cigarette, while the caravaner lay at huge length beside Haddock, like a Viking beside a little, degenerate Greek, and talked geology.

Young Ducie sat up.

"What about another dip. Come on, Clive; do a paddle."

"Thanks, I prefer to stay where I am."

They left him there. They took a tennis ball with them and played games with it, splashing and laughing, and the caravaner was as young as the youngsters.

"What a pity Mr. Haddock can't swim," said the girl, making a cast at the Professor.

Her brother was floating and splashing with his legs.

"Afraid to remove his socks!"

"Phill!"

"It's a fact," and young Ducie turned a somersault.

Our readers are informed that all the characters in each of the stories in this Magazine are purely imaginary, and if the name of any living person happens to be mentioned, no personal reflection is intended.

The Padre's Tea-pot

By Warwick Deeping

(22)

"The padre paused and reflected. Then he extracted the tea-pot from his haversack, removed the tin hat from his head, and turning the tea-pot upside down, with the lid stowed away in his pocket, covered it with his steel helmet. He resumed his walk, holding this sacred tortoise before him in his two hands."



He was a square-built little man with a round and rather innocent face. His eyes were blue. His neck was as thick as his head. All the leatherwork about him—his belt, his leggings, his boots—advertised his absolute newness, a newness that was either repulsive or refreshing to the other men about the table.

He came in out of the darkness into the half-light of the mess-room. Four candles stuck on the tops of fruit tins showed eight faces and eight blue-and-white enamelled plates, two whisky bottles, a loaf of bread and an assortment of mugs and glasses. Half the plaster had fallen from the walls of the room, and the laths stood out like the ribs of a skeleton. The members of the mess sat on three chairs and five boxes; only one chair, the colonel's, had a back to it.

The little man looked at all this with his round blue eyes—eyes of surprise and of innocent curiosity. He stood there as though he expected something to happen and was waiting for it to happen. Half a minute ago his coming had been heralded by a mess orderly whose cynicism was as polished as his hair.

"The new padre, sir."

Eight hungry men had gone on eating as though nothing short of a cataclysm could interfere with the elemental dignity of dinner.

The padre removed his cap.

"Excuse me," he began.

At this point he found several pairs of eyes fixed on him, while the jaws below them continued to masticate; but it seemed to Padre Hogg that only one pair of eyes mattered. They belonged to the man with the crown and the star who sat at the head of the table on the chair that boasted a back. They were grey eyes, very steady, with a suggestion of calm and disciplined fierceness at the back of them, as though the man to whom they belonged had hacked out of life a new god, a god whose face was like the flame of a bursting shell. They were savagely honest eyes, if slightly ironical. Under the steel-grey gleam of them all the soft and succulent little images, the comfortable and conventional sophistries of a suburban drawing-room world melted and ran like lead.

"Good evening," said the man at the head of the table. "Who sent you to us?"

The padre was conscious of a vague feeling of surprise. Had he been a cleverer and a less wholesome soul he might have sensed hostility in the atmosphere of this room. It would have suggested to him that there are occasions and conditions when certain men and certain things seem superfluous and even exasperating to other men. But he came from a poor parish in a very practical Scotch town, and he played a great deal of football.

"An officer with a blue band on his arm, sir."

"Oh, the brigade. Have you the order?"

The padre produced an envelope from his pocket and extracted a slip

of paper from it. In his innocence he could not help thinking that these formalities were rather peculiar. He was hungry; the meat smelt good; it was disappearing at a rapid rate from those eight plates, and the padre was quite ready to possess a plate of his own. But credentials were necessary; he was being asked for his ticket before he could begin to think of taking his place in the greatest show this earth has ever seen.

The colonel glanced at the slip of paper.

"H'm! Captain Hogg. Had dinner?"

"No, sir."

"Sit down."

The colonel tossed the slip of paper to the fair-haired child who acted as adjutant, but as there was no box or chair the padre remained standing.

A thin man with very black eyebrows—he was the battalion doctor and the headquarters mess president—hammered on the table with an aluminium mug.

"Smith, another box—and a plate."

"Yes, sir."

Padre Hogg was provided for. He had joined the mess, but he was not of it. His salvation was to come from the fact that he did not realize that he was outside it.

The mess orderly had placed him at the bottom of the table and next to a little officer with bright eyes and a smudge of black hair on his upper lip. Padre Hogg heard someone address this young officer as "Brains," but the fact that he accepted the name as the boy's surname betrayed his serene innocence. Moreover, he was hungry. He ate while the others talked, but while they talked he listened. No one took the least notice of him. They were quite unaware of his enthusiasm, of the braw and egregious pride with which he sat at that table and ate his first meal in the sacred presence of the "real thing."

Presently the doctor, noticing him casually and feeling warmer hearted and a little more responsible after his grog, gave a push to one of the whisky bottles.

"Padre, have a drink?"

Mr. Hogg turned a Scotch blue eye on the bottle.

"Well, just to celebrate the occasion."

He smiled; he helped himself, and the mess—perhaps without realizing it—measured the quality of that smile and the "level" of the drink. Both were generous. The padre's next-door neighbour gave him a mischievous look.

"Here's luck, padre."

Hogg nodded to him.

"Much of the same to you, Mr. Brains."

Someone guffawed. The doctor, filling a pipe, gave the Scotchman an appraising stare across the table, and then took it upon himself to introduce Mr. Hogg to the other members of the mess.

"Padre, beginning from the right, Lieutenant Mules, Captain Bombs, Lieutenant Buzzer, myself. Captain Nummernine, Major Canteen."

The padre looked at him innocently.

"Oh, I see. I think you got my wrong name, doctor; it ought to be the E. Wee Lamb!"

There were certain members of the mess who promptly reconsidered him and his position, feeling a sudden liking for the man and seeing him in a new light and new garments. His fresh face and blue eyes were not ecclesiastical. He had such an innocent and wholesome smile. You could rag him, tickle him, and he would give you as good as you gave, and remain what he was—a square, solid, laughing Christian.

But this was a momentary breeze; the prevailing wind was set steadily against Padre Hogg's fleece. He was still conscious of the eyes of the man at the head of the table, this servant of sincerity who had a soldier's prejudice against certain people and certain things. This

The Padre's Tea-pot

prejudice was justified, but its justification was beyond Padre Hogg's ken. How was he to know that these plain and elemental men had been taught to blaspheme, and to look with infinite scorn on people who would neither fight nor suffer? How was he to know that two unfortunate predecessors had failed to convince these other men who respected one thing and one thing only—courage. He had come into an atmosphere of mistrust and of casual contempt. At the best he would not matter; at the worst he might be a shameful and an infernal nuisance.

The padre was lighting his pipe when it dawned on him that the battalion was going into the line on the morrow. The man at the end of the table was discussing the "relief." The padre looked at him eagerly. He too—so he believed—was to take his share in the adventure.

And suddenly those grey eyes seemed to notice him and to fill with inexplicable dislike.

"You may like to see your billet, padre. Grant, where are you putting Mr. Hogg?"

"There's a spare bed in the doc's house, sir."

The colonel glanced at the M.O.

"Mansfield, you might show the padre his billet."

The doctor got up; so did Padre Hogg, but his blue eyes remained fixed on Colonel Maitland's face.

"I suppose I am coming with you, sir, to-morrow?"

Maitland turned his head away.

"You will have your instructions, Mr. Hogg, in the morning."

The mess emptied. The colonel, the second in command—Lancaster—and the adjutant were left alone. Lancaster had watched the exit of Mr. Hogg's broad and solid back; his sense of humour had suffered less severely than had Maitland's; he was not married; he had no children; he was more ready to shrug his shoulders and laugh.

He pointed the stem of his pipe at the closed door.

"I'm thinking that's a braw laddie. What about to-morrow, sir?"

Maitland picked up one of the improvised candlesticks and lit a cigarette. His face looked all edge, and as sharp and cutting as an axe.

"He'll stay behind. It's safer. I'm not going to have a repetition of that sort of——"

"Yes, I know it was rather damnable, but don't you think we were a bit unlucky? Old Padre MacGregor was just as sick as we were."

Maitland gave a scornful flick of the chin.

"Does it matter? As far as I can see it has only mattered the wrong way. It did not do the men any good. If a man's religion can't give him the morale of a flea—well, I'd rather have to do with a blackguard. He will stay behind with the transport."

Lancaster nodded.

"Supposing he's annoyed?"

Maitland's eyes gave a shrewd gleam.

"Any decent man would be annoyed, wouldn't he?"

"Oh, I see! It's a cunning idea."

The adjutant's white head was bent over a file of orders. He tapped his teeth with the end of a pencil.

"Shall I write a chit, sir?"

"Yes, my son. Select the padre a servant. Let him have that chit in the morning. Write it now and I'll sign it. And tell his boy not to wake him in the morning."

Padre Hogg slept particularly well, wrapped in his new army blankets on a French box-mattress. He slept so well that he took no further interest in the war until his servant woke him at eight in the morning, waiting upon him with a cup of tea and an official envelope.

The padre extricated himself from his blankets.

"What's this, Jones?"

"Tea, sir, and something from the orderly room."

"Great Scott, man, it is after

eight o'clock! When does the battalion start?"

"It started two hours ago, sir."

"What?"

Padre Hogg swung a muscular pair of legs off the bed, nearly upsetting his tea.

"We are staying with the transport, sir, down by the horse lines. A tin hut, sir. I'll move your things across while you are having breakfast."

Padre Hogg had turned rather pink. He put the mug of tea on the floor, opened the envelope and read his orders:

"Captain Hogg will remain with the 'transport' while the battalion is in the line."

"C. MAITLAND,
"Lieut.-Col."

Private Jones had disappeared with his officer's boots and leggings; but Padre Hogg, instead of slipping back between the blankets and enjoying his tea, padded about the room on his bare feet in a state of agitation. "Damn, it's an insult!" He jabbed his toe, a big toe, against the leg of a chair, and his face assumed its football expression. "But can he give me orders?" His tunic was hanging on the door, and after extracting his pipe, pouch and matches he sat on the bed and smoked, his fair hair all ruffled, his face looking very fresh and pink above the collar of his blue-and-white pyjamas. He smoked furiously; he felt furiously; he meditated furiously, but he was a sweet-tempered child and he was Scotch.

Mr. Barter, the transport officer, was in the middle of a second breakfast when Padre Hogg joined him in the empty mess-room. Barter was a stolid and heavy lad, with a round, anonymous face, a mouthful of strong white teeth and a slow smile. He had no subtleties. He was bored by the idea of having to mess alone with the padre for ten whole days, and boredom made him grumpy.

"Good morning."

Mr. Hogg came in gay and rosy, and glowing with friendliness.

"Morning!" glumphed Barter, reaching for the marmalade pot.

The padre sat down stout and square, and made the stoutest of square meals. He talked; he was not to be discouraged. Mr. Barter's round eyes watched him out of his amorphous face with a suggestion of grudging curiosity. The padre was a cheerful soul, there was no denying it; he rose in the morning like the sun in his strength.

And he seemed so innocent, outrageously innocent, and his innocence was irresistibly refreshing. It made young Barter feel as old and as wise and as wicked as the oldest and wickedest of sergeant-majors. He thawed; he began to let loose his slow smile.

"I wanted to come out here a year ago, you know," said the padre, "but the bishop insisted on us taking turns. I had to toss for it with my fellow curate, and he won. Of course I thought I should go into action with the boys, but I suppose the colonel is rather careful about padres. It wouldn't do for us to get hurt, would it?"

"No, of course not," said Barter with his mouth half across his face.

"I must say I was a little surprised, but I quite see the colonel's point of view. Perhaps he is just a little too considerate. I always obey orders—always. I'm Scotch."

The padre helped himself to a great deal of marmalade.

"But—I suppose—now, that I shouldn't be out of order if I took a little stroll—some day—up to the trenches? Just an afternoon walk—you know."

Mr. Barter supposed that it would be quite in order.

"But it's a bit boring, you know," he said, "a bit stuffy. Fritz makes things like that round here."

"Shells?" asked the padre.

"Yes, shells."

"Real shells?"

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"Lots of them."

"Dear me, it makes me feel that I ought to have brought my umbrella."

When the meal was over the depleted mess transferred itself to a Nissen hut in a dry quagmire about a mile from their Belgian village, while the battalion that had been relieved splunged in and took possession of the billets. The padre and Mr. Barter passed two quite tranquil days in the Nissen hut, with a lot of dry mud and some dead trees to add colour to the landscape. The padre smoked and walked and read novels. He was invariably cheerful. When a casual shell killed two horses he took off his tunic and helped to bury them.

About lunch time on the third day a runner came down from battalion headquarters with a note from the adjutant. Mr. Barter read it while he was eating pickles and corned beef.

"DEAR BABS,—We have had a bit of tragedy up here. Fritz put a whizz-bang into our cook-house last night. Luckily he got nobody, but he laid out our pet tea-pot. I wonder if you could scrounge round and get us another. *Not a tin one.* You know the 'old man's' pash for a real brown pot. Things are a bit lively. I won five bob last night off the doc.—Yours, G."

Barter communicated the contents of the letter to the padre, and the padre's blue eyes filled with interest and sympathy.

"I suppose it's a very serious matter losing a tea-pot," he said.

"Damned serious—beg pardon, very serious," said Barter. "Worse than losing the orderly room box."

"We shall have to replace it."

Barter had an idea.

"I say, padre, can you ride?"

"A bit."

"Supposing you take a nag and bump into Lapanne? You could buy a tea-pot there. Fact is, I expect the vet. this afternoon, and I shall have to hang around."

"I'll go after lunch," said the padre.

"Thanks awfully. It's jolly decent of you."

"Don't mention it," said Padre Hogg.

So the braw laddie was given a horse, and he jogged into Lapanne with one of the transport men in attendance; and he bought a tea-pot, the tea-pot of a dream. It was brown and capacious and homely, with a comfortable spout and a buxom handle. Padre Hogg managed to stuff it in his haversack; he rode back very slowly and with great care.

Barter was not to be seen when the padre returned about four o'clock, but the padre did not wish to see Barter. He went into the Nissen hut, put on his box-respirator and his tin hat, and took the heavy ash stick which he had brought from Scotland. In the act of emerging he met his servant Jones at the door.

"Shall I make tea, sir?"

"Thank you, Jones; I am going to have tea with the colonel. Will you tell Mr. Barter that I may be back for dinner, but he is not to wait."

Jones started.

"You are going up the line, sir?"

"Yes. I just keep straight up the road—till I come to something?"

"It isn't a nice road, sir. When you come to the old Milk Shop turn to the left, and you'll strike the boyau."

"How shall I know the Milk Shop, Jones?"

"Because there ain't no shop left, sir. But you'll see three big dug-outs covered with tree trunks and sand, and the chassis of an ambulance which got smashed up by a big one last week."

"Thank you, Jones. I won't forget."

It was a beautiful summer afternoon, and between the great yellow sand-dunes the padre had glimpses of the vivid blue of the sea. The road undulated among the sandhills, a lazy, leisurely road, yet strangely and uncomfortably desolate under

By Warwick Deeping

the summer sky. It was quiet enough at the moment, and yet it seemed to be remarkably unpopular. Padre Hogg had it all to himself. Brown men, lurking among the sandhills, eschewed it religiously, and looked in surprise at the officer who walked along it as though taking a Sunday stroll. Here and there ugly scars and undulations showed in the *pavé*. Every morning, in the grey of the dawn, gangs of men slaved fearfully at the mending of German shell holes.

The padre was innocence itself. He was almost disappointed at the peacefulness of things, and when a sudden liveliness developed he looked quite pleased. Spouts of sand and black smoke began to rise among the sandhills to the right of the road; there were whinings and rushings in the air; vast detonations. A battery was being shelled.

The padre paused for a while and watched the shell bursts. He might have loitered longer but for that precious tea-pot.

And then he struck his first adventure. "Cr-rump!" Something had hit the road a hundred yards ahead of him, and when he rounded the sweep of a dune he saw a brown figure and a motor-cycle lying in a sort of detached way in the middle of the road. Padre Hogg did not do any thinking. His muscular legs began to run, but they ran in the right direction. He got hold of the despatch-rider and stumbled off with him into the sandhills before the next shell hit the road.

Padre Hogg had never seen blood before, but in the course of the next few minutes he lived in a little world of blood and noise and terror. His sturdiness came out of it, a little pinched and pale about the gills, but with blue eyes set in a smiling stare. The shell-storm slackened, and a Ford ambulance, running for life down the stricken road, saw a figure semaphoring, and pulled up. The padre and a scared orderly got the wounded man into the car.

"You coming, sir?"

"No, I'm going up the line."

"All right, Bill; let her go."

Bill let her go. The car went bouncing down the road in a whirl of dust and sand.

Padre Hogg digressed, sat down and lit a pipe. As Private Jones had said, it was not a nice road; it was a road well calculated to chasten a man's innocence or reduce the high stomach of his pride. The padre did not like it, and he bit very hard on the stem of his pipe. Then he remembered the tea-pot, and examined it for a possible fracture. It was intact.

Presently Padre Hogg resumed his walk, and in the doing of it a new cheerfulness came to him, an exhilarating audacity. He began to look about him for Private Jones's Milk Shop and the three dug-outs, but he never saw them; they were a quarter of a mile behind him. The queer, jagged outlines of broken buildings rose up before him beyond the dunes and close to the blue of the sea, and the road looked even more damned and desolate and lonely.

"If I go on I must meet somebody," thought the padre, and he went on.

But he did not meet anybody. Wise men who had no cause to be out in the sunlight kept underground. But he met something else, a series of high-bursting shrapnel shells; chunks of metal thudded into the sand.

The padre paused and reflected. Then he extracted the tea-pot from his haversack, removed the tin hat from his head, and turning the tea-pot upside down, with the lid stowed away in his pocket, covered it with his steel helmet. He resumed his walk, holding this sacred tortoise before him in his two hands.

Padre Hogg had advanced another fifty yards when he heard a shout.

"Hi, what the hell——!"

Glancing to the left towards some ragged walls he saw a sort of hole in the ground, with a timber frame built into it, and a gas blanket

The Padre's Tea-pot

rolled up neatly at the top. A man was standing in this submerged doorway. He waved an arm.

The padre, crossing over to him, recognized the badge of his own battalion.

"Excuse me, but I am looking for headquarters."

The man was all eyes as he saluted.

"Come down out of that, sir. Lord love me, do you know where you are?"

"Somewhere in Belgium!" said the padre, smiling.

"About a hundred yards behind the front-line trench, sir. Why—why the hell they didn't snipe you—"

He glanced at the padre's tin hat and the thing underneath it.

"Oh, a tea-pot," said the padre, answering the look. "I was afraid it might get damaged—you know."

By some apt coincidence Colonel Maitland, returning down the gallery from a tour of inspection, happened on the padre at the bottom of the steps. He stood outlined against a patch of blue sky, bare-headed, perspiring, still holding the tea-pot under his brown steel hat.

"What, Padre Hogg!"

The padre smiled at him.

"Excuse me, sir, I'm afraid it's against orders, but I have brought up a new tea-pot."

He produced the vessel from under his tin hat.

"It was rather lively on the road, so I put this over the thing."

Maitland's eyes gleamed.

"Do you mean to say you walked up the road?"

"Well, sir, I must have missed the boyau; but I thought that if I followed the road—"

"He very near followed it to Heaven, sir," said a voice from the shadows.

It was at this point that Maitland noticed something on the padre's sleeve.

"What's that? You've been hit, man!"

"I don't think so, sir," said Hogg slowly, looking at his sleeve; "some-

body got hurt, and I had to get him out of trouble and put him on the bus."

Maitland took the little man by the shoulder.

"I haven't had tea yet, padre. Have you?"

"No, sir."

"We'll go and christen that tea-pot."

They walked together down the long tunnel that burrowed behind and through the cellars and basements of a row of houses. The padre had put his tin hat on his head, but he still carried the tea-pot in his two hands. The colonel pulled back a blanket and swept Mr. Hogg into the cellar that served as the headquarters' mess.

"The padre has brought us a tea-pot. Carried it right up the road under his tin hat!"

There was silence, the silence of astonishment, but it did not last for long. They gathered round the mess-table, and Padre Hogg was made to sit at the colonel's right hand.

"There's no lid, sir," said the voice of the mess orderly.

"Bless me, it's in my pocket!" And the padre produced it.

"Brains," who sat next him, put an arm round the padre's waist.

"Dear old thing, you have put the lid on it!"

They were very merry at tea, and all the fierceness and the scorn had gone out of Maitland's eyes.

"Well, how do you like our basement flat, padre?"

"It's quite a nice place," said Mr. Hogg, looking at the slab of cake "Brains" had slipped on to his plate; "I must say I should like to stay here, sir."

"You would, would you?"

"I should, sir."

"Brains" prodded him affectionately in the ribs.

"Of course you are going to stay, dear old thing. That's so, sir, isn't it?"

"I rather think so," said the colonel.

WARWICK DEEPING.

The Padre's Tea-Pot

"Prejudice is the child of ignorance"

By WARWICK DEEPING

HE was a square-built little man with a round and rather innocent face. His eyes were blue. His neck was as thick as his head. All the leatherwork about him—his belt, his leggings, his boots—advertised his absolute newness, a newness that was either repulsive or refreshing to the other men about the table.

He came in out of the darkness into the half-light of the mess-room. Four candles stuck on the tops of fruit tins showed eight faces and eight blue-and-white enamelled plates, two whisky bottles, a loaf of bread and an assortment of mugs and glasses. Half the plaster had fallen from the walls of the room, and the laths stood out like the ribs of a skeleton. The members of the mess sat on three chairs and five boxes; only one chair, the colonel's, had a back to it.

The little man looked at all this with his round blue eyes—eyes of surprise and of innocent curiosity. He stood there as though he expected something to happen and was waiting for it to happen. Half a minute ago his coming had been heralded by a mess orderly whose cynicism was as polished as his hair.

"The new padre, sir."

Eight hungry men had gone on eating as though nothing short of a cataclysm could interfere with the elemental dignity of dinner.

The padre removed his cap.

"Excuse me," he began.

At this point he found several pairs of eyes fixed on him, while the jaws below them continued to masticate; but it seemed to Padre Hogg that only one pair of eyes mattered. They belonged to the man with the crown and the star who sat at the head of the table on the chair that boasted a back. They were grey eyes, very steady, with a suggestion of calm and disciplined fierceness at the back of them, as though the man to whom they belonged had hacked out of life a new god, a god whose face was like the dome of a bursting shell. They were

savagely honest eyes, if slightly ironical. Under the steel-grey gleam of them all the soft and succulent little images, the comfortable and conventional sophistries of a suburban drawing-room world melted and ran like lead.

"Good evening," said the man at the head of the table. "Who sent you to us?"

The padre was conscious of a vague feeling of surprise. Had he been a cleverer and a less wholesome soul he might have sensed hostility in the atmosphere of this room. It would have suggested to him that there are occasions and conditions when certain men and certain things seem superfluous and even exasperating to other men. But he came from a poor parish in a very practical Scotch town, and he played a great deal of football.

"An officer with a blue band on his arm, sir."

"Oh, the brigade. Have you the order?"

The padre produced an envelope from his pocket and extracted a slip of paper from it. In his innocence he could not help thinking that these formalities were rather peculiar. He was hungry; the meat smelt good; it was disappearing at a rapid rate from those eight plates, and the padre was quite ready to possess a plate of his own. But credentials were necessary; he was being asked for his ticket before he could begin to think of taking his place in the greatest show this earth has ever seen.

The colonel glanced at the slip of paper.

"H'm! Captain Hogg. Had dinner?"

"No, sir."

"Sit down."

The colonel tossed the slip of paper to the fair-haired child who acted as adjutant, but as there was no box or chair the padre remained standing.

A thin man with very black eyebrows—he was the battalion doctor and the headquarters mess president—hammered on the table with an aluminium mug.

The Padre's Tea-Pot

"Smith, another box—and a plate."

"Yes, sir."

Padre Hogg was provided for. He had joined the mess, but he was not of it. His salvation was to come from the fact that he did not realize that he was outside it.

The mess orderly had placed him at the bottom of the table and next to a little officer with bright eyes and a smudge of black hair on his upper lip. Padre Hogg heard someone address this young officer as "Brains," but the fact that he accepted the name as the boy's surname betrayed his serene innocence. Moreover, he was hungry. He ate while the others talked, but while they talked he listened. No one took the least notice of him. They were quite unaware of his enthusiasm, of the braw and egregious pride with which he sat at that table and ate his first meal in the sacred presence of the "real thing."

Presently the doctor, noticing him casually and feeling warmer hearted and a little more responsible after his grog, gave a push to one of the whisky bottles.

"Padre, have a drink?"

Mr. Hogg turned a Scotch blue eye on the bottle.

"Well, just to celebrate the occasion."

He smiled; he helped himself, and the mess—perhaps without realizing it—measured the quality of that smile and the "level" of the drink. Both were generous. The padre's next-door neighbour gave him a mischievous look.

"Here's luck, padre."

Hogg nodded to him.

"Much of the same to you, Mr. Brains."

Someone guffawed. The doctor, filling a pipe, gave the Scotchman an appraising stare across the table, and then took it upon himself to introduce Mr. Hogg to the other members of the mess.

"Padre, beginning from the right, Lieutenant Mules, Captain Bombs, Lieutenant Buzzer, myself. Captain Numbernine, Major Canteen."

The padre looked at him innocently.

"Oh, I see. I think you got my wrong name, doctor; it ought to be the E. Wee Lamb!"

There were certain members of the mess who promptly reconsidered him and his position, feeling a sudden liking for the man and seeing him in a new light and new garments. His fresh face and blue eyes were not ecclesiastical. He had such an innocent and wholesome smile. You could rag him,

tickle him, and he would give you as good as you gave, and remain what he was—a square, solid, laughing Christian.

But this was a momentary breeze; the prevailing wind was set steadily against Padre Hogg's fleece. He was still conscious of the eyes of the man at the head of the table, this servant of sincerity who had a soldier's prejudice against certain people and certain things. This prejudice was justified, but its justification was beyond Padre Hogg's ken. How was he to know that these plain and elemental men had been taught to blaspheme, and to look with infinite scorn on people who would neither fight nor suffer? How was he to know that two unfortunate predecessors had failed to convince these other men who respected one thing and one thing only—courage. He had come into an atmosphere of mistrust and of casual contempt. At the best he would not matter; at the worst he might be a shameful and an infernal nuisance.

The padre was lighting his pipe when it dawned on him that the battalion was going into the line on the morrow. The man at the end of the table was discussing the "relief." The padre looked at him eagerly. He too—so he believed—was to take his share in the adventure.

And suddenly those grey eyes seemed to notice him and to fill with inexplicable dislike.

"You may like to see your billet, padre. Grant, where are you putting Mr. Hogg?"

"There's a spare bed in the doc's house, sir."

The colonel glanced at the M.O.

"Mansfield, you might show the padre his billet."

The doctor got up; so did Padre Hogg, but his blue eye remained fixed on Colonel Maitland's face.

"I suppose I am coming with you, sir, to-morrow?"

Maitland turned his head away.

"You will have your instructions, Mr. Hogg, in the morning."

The mess emptied. The colonel, the second in command—Lancaster—and the adjutant were left alone. Lancaster had watched the exit of Mr. Hogg's broad and solid back; his sense of humour had suffered less severely than had Maitland's; he was not married; he had no children; he was more ready to shrug his shoulders and laugh.

He pointed the s closed door.

"I'm thinking th about to-morrow, s

Maitland picked u candlesticks and lit looked all edge, and an axe.

"He'll stay behi going to have a repe

"Yes, I know i but don't you think Old Padre MacGre were."

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The adjutant's a file of orders. the end of a penc

"Shall I write

"Yes, my so servant. Let hi morning. Write tell his boy not to

Padre Hogg wrapped in his French box-matt he took no furth his servant w morning, waiting tea and an offic The padre e blankets.

"What's this,

"Tea, sir, orderly room."

"Great Scot o'clock! When

"It started t

"What?"

Padre Hogg s off the bed, near

"We are stay down by the ho move your th having breakfas

Padre Hogg

He pointed the stem of his pipe at the closed door.

"I'm thinking that's a braw laddie. What about to-morrow, sir?"

Maitland picked up one of the improvised candlesticks and lit a cigarette. His face looked all edge, and as sharp and cutting as an axe.

"He'll stay behind. It's safer. I'm not going to have a repetition of that sort of—"

"Yes, I know it was rather damnable, but don't you think we were a bit unlucky? Old Padre MacGregor was just as sick as we were."

Maitland gave a scornful flick of the chin.

"Does it matter? As far as I can see it has only mattered the wrong way. It did not do the men any good. If a man's religion can't give him the morale of a flea—well, I'd rather have to do with a blackguard. He will stay behind with the transport."

Lancaster nodded.

"Supposing he's annoyed?"

Maitland's eyes gave a shrewd gleam.

"Any decent man would be annoyed, wouldn't he?"

"Oh, I see! It's a cunning idea."

The adjutant's white head was bent over a file of orders. He tapped his teeth with the end of a pencil.

"Shall I write a chit, sir?"

"Yes, my son. Select the padre a servant. Let him have that chit in the morning. Write it now and I'll sign it. And tell his boy not to wake him in the morning."

Padre Hogg slept particularly well, wrapped in his new army blankets on a French box-mattress. He slept so well that he took no further interest in the war until his servant woke him at eight in the morning, waiting upon him with a cup of tea and an official envelope.

The padre extricated himself from his blankets.

"What's this, Jones?"

"Tea, sir, and something from the orderly room."

"Great Scott, man, it is after eight o'clock! When does the battalion start?"

"It started two hours ago, sir."

"What?"

Padre Hogg swung a muscular pair of legs off the bed, nearly upsetting his tea.

"We are staying with the transport, sir, down by the horse lines. A tin hut, sir. I'll move your things across while you are having breakfast."

Padre Hogg had turned rather pink. He

put the mug of tea on the floor, opened the envelope and read his orders:

Captain Hogg will remain with the 'transport' while the battalion is in the line.

C. MAITLAND,
Lieut.-Col.

Private Jones had disappeared with his officer's boots and leggings; but Padre Hogg, instead of slipping back between the blankets and enjoying his tea, padded about the room on his bare feet in a state of agitation. "Damn, it's an insult!" He jabbed his toe, a big toe, against the leg of a chair, and his face assumed its football expression. "But can he give me orders?" His tunic was hanging on the door, and after extracting his pipe, pouch and matches he sat on the bed and smoked, his fair hair all ruffled, his face looking very fresh and pink above the collar of his blue-and-white pyjamas. He smoked furiously; he felt furiously; he meditated furiously, but he was a sweet-tempered child and he was Scotch.

¶

MR. BARTER, the transport officer, was in the middle of a second breakfast when Padre Hogg joined him in the empty mess-room. Barter was a stolid and heavy lad, with a round, anonymous face, a mouthful of strong white teeth and a slow smile. He had no subtleties. He was bored by the idea of having to mess alone with the padre for ten whole days, and boredom made him grumpy.

"Good morning."

Mr. Hogg came in gay and rosy, and glowing with friendliness.

"Morning!" glumphed Barter, reaching for the marmalade pot.

The padre sat down stout and square, and made the stoutest of square meals. He talked; he was not to be discouraged. Mr. Barter's round eyes watched him out of his amorphous face with a suggestion of grudging curiosity. The padre was a cheerful soul, there was no denying it; he rose in the morning like the sun in his strength.

And he seemed so innocent, outrageously innocent, and his innocence was irresistibly refreshing. It made young Barter feel as old and as wise and as wicked as the oldest and wickedest of sergeant-majors. He thawed; he began to let loose his slow smile.

"I wanted to come out here a year ago, you know," said the padre, "but the bishop

The Padre's Tea-Pot

insisted on us taking turns. I had to toss for it with my fellow curate, and he won. Of course I thought I should go into action with the boys, but I suppose the colonel is rather careful about padres. It wouldn't do for us to get hurt, would it?"

"No, of course not," said Barter with his mouth half across his face.

"I must say I was a little surprised, but I quite see the colonel's point of view. Perhaps he is just a little too considerate. I always obey orders—always. I'm Scotch."

The padre helped himself to a great deal of marmalade.

"But—I suppose—now, that I shouldn't be out of order if I took a little stroll—some day—up to the trenches? Just an afternoon walk—you know."

Mr. Barter supposed that it would be quite in order.

"But it's a bit boring, you know," he said, "a bit stuffy. Fritz makes things like that round here."

"Shells?" asked the padre.

"Yes, shells."

"Dear me, it makes me feel that I ought to have brought my umbrella."

When the meal was over the depleted mess transferred itself to a Nissen hut in a dry quagmire about a mile from their Belgian village, while the battalion that had been relieved splunged in and took possession of the billets. The padre and Mr. Barter passed two quite tranquil days in the Nissen hut, with a lot of dry mud and some dead trees to add colour to the landscape. The padre smoked and walked and read novels. He was invariably cheerful. When a casual shell killed two horses he took off his tunic and helped to bury them.

About lunch time on the third day a runner came down from battalion headquarters with a note from the adjutant. Mr. Barter read it while he was eating pickles and corned beef.

DEAR BABS,—We have had a bit of tragedy up here. Fritz put a whizz-bang into our cook house last night. Luckily he got nobody, but he laid out our pet tea-pot. I wonder if you could scrounge round and get us another. Not a tin one. You know the 'old man's' pash for a real brown pot. Things are a bit lively. I won five bob last night off the doc.—Yours, G.

Barter communicated the contents of the letter to the padre, and the padre's eyes filled with interest and sympathy.

"I suppose it's a very serious matter losing a tea-pot," he said.

"Damned serious—beg pardon, very serious," said Barter. "Worse than losing the orderly room box."

"We shall have to replace it."

Barter had an idea.

"I say, padre, can you ride?"

"A bit."

"Supposing you take a nag and bump into Lapanne? You could buy a tea-pot there. Fact is, I expect the vet. this afternoon, and I shall have to hang around."

"I'll go after lunch," said the padre.

"Thanks awfully. It's jolly decent of you."

"Don't mention it," said Padre Hogg.

So the braw laddie was given a horse, and he jogged into Lapanne with one of the transport men in attendance; and he bought a tea-pot, the tea-pot of a dream. It was brown and capacious and homely, with a comfortable spout and a buxom handle. Padre Hogg managed to stuff it in his haversack; he rode back very slowly and with great care.

Barter was not to be seen when the padre returned about four o'clock, but the padre did not wish to see Barter. He went into the Nissen hut, put on his box-respirator and his tin hat, and took the heavy ash stick which he had brought from Scotland. In the act of emerging he met his servant Jones at the door.

"Shall I make tea, sir?"

"Thank you, Jones; I am going to have tea with the colonel. Will you tell Mr. Barter that I may be back for dinner, but he is not to wait."

Jones started.

"You are going up the line, sir?"

"Yes. I just keep straight up the road—till I come to something?"

"It isn't a nice road, sir. When you come to the old Milk Shop turn to the left, and you'll strike the boyau."

"How shall I know the Milk Shop, Jones?"

"Because there ain't no shop left, sir. But you'll see three big dug-outs covered with tree trunks and sand, and the chassis of an ambulance which got smashed up by a big one last week."

"Thank you, Jones. I won't forget."

It was a beautiful summer afternoon, and between the great yellow sand-dunes the padre had glimpses of the vivid blue of the sea. The road undulated among the sand-hills, a lazy, leisurely road, yet strangely and uncomfortably desolate under the summer

sky. It was quiet enough yet it seemed to be replete with danger. Padre Hogg had it all men, lurking among the trees, and looking at it religiously, and looking at the officer who walked alone on a Sunday stroll. Her and undulations show morning, in the grey men slaved fearfully German shell holes.

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The padre was innocence itself. He was almost disappointed at the peacefulness of things, and when a sudden liveliness developed he looked quite pleased. Spouts of sand and black smoke began to rise among the sandhills to the right of the road; there were whinings and rushings in the air; vast detonations. A battery was being shelled.

The padre paused for a while and watched the shell bursts. He might have loitered longer but for that precious tea-pot.

And then he struck his first adventure. "Cr-rump!" Something had hit the road a hundred yards ahead of him, and when he rounded the sweep of a dune he saw a brown figure and a motor-cycle lying in a sort of detached way in the middle of the road. Padre Hogg did not do any thinking. His muscular legs began to run, but they ran in the right direction. He got hold of the despatch-rider and stumbled off with him into the sandhills before the next shell hit the road.

Padre Hogg had never seen blood before, but in the course of the next few minutes he lived in a little world of blood and noise and terror. His sturdiness came out of it, a little pinched and pale about the gills, but with blue eyes set in a smiling stare. The shell-storm slackened, and a Ford ambulance, running for life down the stricken road, saw a figure semaphoring, and pulled up. The padre and a scared orderly got the wounded man into the car.

"You coming, sir?"

"No, I'm going up the line."

"All right, Bill; let her go."

Bill let her go. The car went bouncing down the road in a whirl of dust and sand.

Padre Hogg digressed, sat down and lit a pipe. As Private Jones had said, it was not a nice road; it was a road well calculated to chasten a man's innocence or reduce the high stomach of his pride. The padre did not like it, and he bit very hard on the stem of his pipe. Then he remembered the

tea-pot, and examined it for a possible fracture. It was intact.

Presently Padre Hogg resumed his walk, and in the doing of it a new cheerfulness came to him, an exhilarating audacity. He began to look about him for Private Jones's Milk Shop and the three dug-outs, but he never saw them; they were a quarter of a mile behind him. The queer, jagged outlines of broken buildings rose up before him beyond the dunes and close to the blue of the sea, and the road looked even more damned and desolate and lonely.

"If I go on I must meet somebody," thought the padre, and he went on.



BUT he did not meet anybody. Wise men who had no cause to be out in the sunlight kept underground. But he met something else, a series of high-bursting shrapnel shells; chunks of metal thudded into the sand.

The padre paused and reflected. Then he extracted the tea-pot from his haversack, removed the tin hat from his head, and turning the tea-pot upside down, with the lid stowed away in his pocket, covered it with his steel helmet. He resumed his walk, holding this sacred tortoise before him in his two hands.

Padre Hogg had advanced another fifty yards when he heard a shout.

"Hi, what the hell——!"

Glancing to the left towards some ragged walls he saw a sort of hole in the ground, with a timber frame built into it, and a gas blanket rolled up neatly at the top. A man was standing in this submerged doorway. He waved an arm.

The padre, crossing over to him, recognized the badge of his own battalion.

"Excuse me, but I am looking for headquarters."

The man was all eyes as he saluted.

"Come down out of that, sir. Lord love me, do you know where you are?"

"Somewhere in Belgium!" said the padre, smiling.

"About a hundred yards behind the front-line trench, sir. Why—why the hell they didn't snipe you——"

He glanced at the padre's tin hat and the thing underneath it.

"Oh, a tea-pot," said the padre, answering the look. "I was afraid it might get damaged—you know."

The Padre's Tea-Pot

By some apt coincidence Colonel Maitland, returning down the gallery from a tour of inspection, happened on the padre at the bottom of the steps. He stood outlined against a patch of blue sky, bareheaded, perspiring, still holding the tea-pot under his brown steel hat.

"What, Padre Hogg!"

The padre smiled at him.

"Excuse me, sir, I'm afraid it's against orders, but I have brought up a new tea-pot."

He produced the vessel from under his tin hat.

"It was rather lively on the road, so I put this over the thing."

Maitland's eyes gleamed.

"Do you mean to say you walked up the road?"

"Well, sir, I must have missed the boyau; but I thought that if I followed the road——"

"He very near followed it to Heaven, sir," said a voice from the shadows.

It was at this point that Maitland noticed something on the padre's sleeve.

"What's that? You've been hit, man!"

"I don't think so, sir," said Hogg slowly, looking at his sleeve; "somebody got hurt, and I had to get him out of trouble and put him on the bus."

Maitland took the little man by the shoulder.

"I haven't had tea yet, padre. Have you?"

"No, sir."

"We'll go and christen that tea-pot."

They walked together down the long tunnel that burrowed behind and through

the cellars and basements of a row of houses. The padre had put his tin hat on his head, but he still carried the tea-pot in his two hands. The colonel pulled back a blanket and swept Mr. Hogg into the cellar that served as the headquarters' mess.

"The padre has brought us a tea-pot. Carried it right up the road under his tin hat!"

There was silence, the silence of astonishment, but it did not last for long. They gathered round the mess-table, and Padre Hogg was made to sit at the colonel's right hand.

"There's no lid, sir," said the voice of the mess orderly.

"Bless me, it's in my pocket!" And the padre produced it.

"Brains," who sat next him, put an arm round the padre's waist.

"Dear old thing, you have put the lid on it!"

They were very merry at tea, and all the fierceness and the scorn had gone out of Maitland's eyes.

"Well, how do you like our basement flat, padre?"

"It's quite a nice place," said Mr. Hogg, looking at the slab of cake "Brains" had slipped on to his plate; "I must say I should like to stay here, sir."

"You would, would you?"

"I should, sir."

"Brains" prodded him affectionately in the ribs.

"Of course you are going to stay, dear old thing. That's so, sir, isn't it?"

"I rather think so," said the colonel.



THE ARGOSY VOTING COMPETITION

WE again offer two prizes—one of Two Guineas and the other of One Guinea—to the readers who send in the titles of the four best stories in the order of merit which most nearly coincides with the votes of the majority. Stories must be selected from this issue. The Editor's decision will be final.

Entries should be made on postcards addressed to "Vote," THE ARGOSY, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4 (Comp.), and sent in by February 28th, 1928. The result will be announced in THE ARGOSY for MAY.

For the December competition the prizes are divided between three, and we have pleasure in awarding One Guinea to each of the following: W. H. CAMPBELL, 123, Athelstan Road, Hastings; E. GRAHAM, 214, Gladstone Street, Bradford Moor, Bradford; M. E. STUTTARD, 19a, Pembroke Square, Kensington, W.8.

PROOFED
LONG COMPLETE NOVEL

MAY 1924

The
Whistling Troubadour
By Warwick Deeping

"Romney whistled one more tune, keeping the group in the vestibule under observation, and as he made his last circuit of the Tartarin lounge he invited largesse, holding out his blue cap. But he was excited, and once or twice some of his notes were flat and hurried, for he had seen in Ghool and the girl a reproduction in real life of the tale of Svengali and Trilby."



A COUPLE of chars-a-bancs and two or three private cars had pulled up outside "La Reserve" on the upper Corniche road, and some of the occupants were gathered round the green tables, drinking coffee or wine. "La Reserve" was very new and rather small, with brilliant white walls and shutters painted a horizon blue. It flew the "tricolour," and, looking down from its heights, smiled a white smile at those who passed upon the dusty road. Monsieur Blanc, the patron and creator of this upland café, had come to an arrangement with some of the drivers of the chars-a-bancs, and in pulling up here they suggested pleasant thirsts to the multifarious tourists, who bought picture postcards, praised the scenery, and acquired an eagerness for dinner.

Here, suddenly, as though he had slid down the grey rocks, appeared a bland young man in blue. He smiled. He had a broad, fair face, strong teeth, and audacious but friendly eyes. He wore the blue cap of an Alpine rifleman, blue putties, brown breeches, and a sort of Tyrolese jacket edged with white braid. He had an "air." He bowed to the people in the cars and at the little green tables.

"Messieurs, mesdames, je suis Le Troubadour, Le Siffleur de Provence. Attendez, s'il vous plaît."

He smiled on them all, and began to whistle, walking slowly to and fro with a slight swing of the shoulders, head cocked, eyes steady. He whistled amazingly; he had the shrill notes of a fife and the deeper appeal of a flute, and sometimes his whistling had a blackbird's rich plaintiveness. He gave

them "Tales of Hoffman," perhaps because he knew that most people like their music with a little honey to it, and they sat and listened and observed him, for he was worth watching for his grace of movement and his pleasant, boyish swagger.

"Là, là—un joli garçon."

A moustached Frenchwoman applauded.

"Regardez les belles jambes!"

The whistler bowed, smiled, and his smile made all the world his friend. He seemed to have moments of shyness, that gallant shyness that is so pleasing to women.

"Merci, mesdames et messieurs. Une petite chanson de Russie."

He whistled them some Russian melody, and his movements became slower and his eyes melancholy.

"Certainly—he is an artist," said someone.

Another group was discussing his nationality.

"Swiss."

"No, from the Tyrol."

But, as a matter of fact, the whistler was English, one—Peter Romney—who preferred the blue sky and a few easy francs to London ceilings and slavery.

On the back seat of a blue char-a-banc a girl and an old man sat listening. They had not descended to partake of coffee, and the eyes of the girl were fixed upon the whistler. She might have been a bird listening to her mate with the coming of spring, and she was a creature of black velvet and white silk, wide-eyed, slim, with a little red mouth, pensive and poignant. She stared like a child. And beside her the old man was trimming his finger-nails, his greyish red beard tousled up over the collar of his ulster. He had the face of a goat, quick, red-lidded eyes, and an air of pinched sagacity. He

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smiled to himself, his harsh skin crackling like parchment, while the scissors snipped at his pink and meticulous nails.

The whistler was in full flood, giving out deep and plaintive notes, and moving slowly towards the huge blue automobile, when an upward glance brought his eyes to the eyes of the girl above him. For a moment his head seemed set stiffly in a surprised stare. There was an almost imperceptible weakening of a note, and then he had faced about, and was continuing his slow pacing in front of the white house.

But when he turned and came back towards the char-a-banc he fixed his eyes on the girl as though he would have wished her to understand that all his music was for her. He whistled that old English song, "Drink to me only with thine eyes," and broodingly her dark beauty looked down upon him.

The man with the red eyes and the scraggy beard had become aware of this sudden linking-up of hearts and of glances. He took a peep at the whistling vagabond with his freckles and his shyly audacious eyes.

"Dear me, the fellow works hard for his money."

He threw Le Siffleur a franc piece, and Romney gave them a bow, which went largely to the little lady.

"Thank you."

He swung away, smiling, but turned again before he had gone three yards, and the suddenness of his glance discovered something, a twinge of pain on the girl's face, a dilating of her pupils. She drew in her breath with a little sibilant start.

"Mr. Redbeard" had turned his back. He appeared to be examining a map, nor could Peter Romney surmise that he had jabbed the girl's wrist with the point of his penknife. But that spasm of pain was unmistakable, that little agonized gasp and the shadow of fear in the eyes.

She turned away, and Romney saw her settle herself stiffly and decorously beside the man whose beard looked as though it had had an egg broken in it. The tourists were climbing back into the char-a-banc. The driver was buttoning up his coat.

The whistler pivoted on the ball of one foot, and with his back to the char-a-banc, whistled "The Cock of the North," until, with a pr'rump and a puff of blue smoke, the automobile took a rude farewell of him.

Monsieur Blanc of "La Reserve," a

genial and oily little man, strolled out and spoke to the whistler.

"That is rather a good turn of yours, *mon ami*. You and I might be useful to each other."

"That's so," said the Englishman; "but I do better at the hotels. Thanks all the same."

He smiled, whistled a bar or two of "Madalon," and, gathering up a knapsack and a stick from one of the green chairs, set off along the road in the direction of La Turbie.

II

PETER ROMNEY looked at the sea and the sky and at the great soaring cliffs, and at the white towns glimmering below, but chiefly he was conscious of that sudden start of pain in the eyes of the girl. Why had she winced like that?—just as though she were abnormally sensitive to discords, and he had whistled the most atrociously false note.

"There is a reason for things, and something had hurt her. Suppose that old curmudgeon is her father. Well, anyway, I shall not see her again."

Yet the dark appeal of her had set his youth moving to music and coloured his thoughts, and as he swung along the mountain road with the Tete de Chien looming ahead of him, his vagabond philosophy dealt with the problem of dualism. There were times when he hungered for a mate, someone to tread the road with him and share its adventures, its little simple meals eaten on a sunny rock or under the shade of trees, its glasses of wine at roadside inns, its spaciousness, its irresponsible freedom. A mate who would laugh and sing, and snuggle up to him like a bird when the wind blew cold.

And then he laughed at himself. "Village idiot! Trailing a girl round with you! Your freedom goes when you strike up a partnership with a petticoat. This freedom, what? My gollywoggo! And yet—I should like to know what made her wince like that."

He covered the three miles to La Turbie in less than an hour, and, sighting the great grey drum of the Roman monument and the white walls of the houses, he moistened his lips and decided that he was thirsty. He would stop at one of the cafés and drink wine before standing up to whistle small change out of the pockets of the tourists. Good! But La Turbie sprang a surprise upon him, for when he came to the broad *space*

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in the centre of the little town he saw a blue char-a-banc standing at one side of the "place." The bonnet flaps were raised, and a coatless driver was using French swear-words on a recalcitrant engine.

Romney drew in against a wall. His quick eyes searched the "place" and the groups sitting outside the café. Yes, they were there at one of the tables, Red-beard with a glass of vermouth in front of him, the girl with nothing. The man was reading a paper, holding it close to his face, while the girl watched the life about her with an air of questioning it and of finding no answer.

The Whistler added swift movement to the suddenness of a vagrant inspiration. On the right of him an archway opened into one of the narrow, secret southern streets, full of shadows and half-shuttered windows, and dark entries, and doors that seemed sealed with silence. A few tourists idled over the cobbles, vaguely interested and vaguely inarticulate. Romney slipped through the archway, and, putting himself in the shadow of a wall, began to whistle.

He could see the two seated at the café table, but it was more than likely that they could not see him, for the westering sun was pouring slantwise upon them, and the archway was curtained with shadow. He whistled an old English song, and, like a blackbird hidden in a bush, he piped for that other bird to hear.

She did hear. He saw her throw sudden swift glances to and fro. A restlessness seemed to seize her. She glanced at her companion on the other side of the table, as though to discover how much he had heard, but the man was intent upon his paper. Moreover, he was not very quick of hearing.

She said something to him and stood up. He eyed her for a moment, nodded, and watched her cross the open space to the char-a-banc. She said something to the driver; in fact, she asked him how long it would be before they would start for Mentone.

"Half an hour, m'amselle."

The old man saw her pass round the side of the char-a-banc and walk listlessly across the "place." She paused and stared up at the houses; it seemed obvious that she had no purpose, and with a little sinister crinkling of his countenance he ceased to watch her, and resumed the reading of his paper.

The girl approached the gateway, and from the shadowiness within came the plaintive whistling of one of Laurence

Hope's Kashmiri love-songs. "Pale hands I love—" She paused, wide-eyed, and as she paused the music went away from her, trailing its passionate piping up the narrow, winding alley. She followed. There was something wayward and fantastic in the player's mood, and like a Pied Piper he threaded the narrow streets and passage-ways, luring her after him. Her eyes showed little flickers of light, spicules of gold in the great black pupils.

The whistling changed to a merry measure, and she saw him in an archway ahead of her, where the sun was shining. He was looking back.

She followed. She came out into the sunlight and the broad space where the huge, broken drum of Augustus's tower rose from its square platform. Masses of stones and sections of columns lay about, and on one of these columns he was seated, pack laid beside him, one hand holding his blue cap. His eyes were looking straight at her, shy, smiling, compelling eyes. His hair had a slight wave to it, and the glossiness of plumage.

She moved forward, her eyes on his. She knew now that he was going to speak to her, that he wanted to speak to her, and she wondered what manner of man he would show himself to be. Would he be like all those other men—? She gave the faintest shudder.

He stood up. He smiled, and when she was within three yards of him he made her a bow. Also, she fancied that his colour deepened.

"So my legs have proved more reliable than your automobile?"

She looked up at him, her head slightly on one side, like a bird considering the timbre of another bird's tone.

"Yes. But you must have walked very quickly."

"Perhaps. It is a good road, and the air makes your heels light. I don't know whether you are afraid of a stone seat?"

She sat down on the column and looked up at the ruin, while Romney remained for a moment standing beside her.

"Wonderful chaps, the old Romans. How long is your driver going to be tinkering at the car?"

"He said half an hour."

She had a soft voice, a voice without edges, and vaguely plaintive.

"Half an hour in French means—"

"Yes, we shall be late. How wonderfully you whistle."

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"Thank you. My motto is 'Whistle and live.' Are you staying near here?" She had an air of hesitating. He had sat down about a yard from her, and she knew that his question was not an idle one.

"Yes."

"With your father?"

"My adopted father."

She caught a glance from his grey eyes.

"We are staying at Monte Carlo. We have a little villa there."

"I suppose you would not tell me—?"

Her eyelids flickered.

"Ghool. His name is Ghool."

"And yours, of course?"

"I suppose so."

She was aware of having surprised him. And she was conscious, too, that he was looking at her with a kind of questioning intentness. She flushed and pulled at one sleeve, an unconscious gesture.

"Pansy—that is my name."

"Pansy—"

He had glanced at her hands, and suddenly he saw something that made his grey eyes grow sharp and grave, a minute fresh wound on her wrist, a red line crusted with a thread of blood.

She discovered his glance, and quickly and instinctively she made a movement of drawing down her sleeve.

Her eyes rallied to his.

"You have not told me—"

"Oh, my name is Romney—Peter Romney. In the old days I should have been a troubadour."

"What's that?"

"An idle sort of fellow who goes about stringing verses and singing them—"

"But you whistle."

"Fewer whistlers than singers. Would you mind telling me something?"

She looked frightened.

"What?"

"How you got that little mark?"

He saw that he had frightened her, but it seemed to him that she was hesitating between two different fears. She twisted her hands and looked tragic, nor was she to be left to tell him what he wished to know, for some other influence intervened. Almost, it was as though someone had touched her. She started, and, turning quickly, glanced towards the archway through which they had come.

Romney saw him, too, the goat-headed man with the rusty beard. He was standing in the shadow of the arch and

looking towards them. He remained quite still, staring, until the girl rose from the column, and, ignoring Romney, began to walk towards the arch.

Romney stood up.

"Miss Pansy— Whereabouts in Monte—?"

She did not seem to hear, and as he watched her move away it struck him that there was something peculiar about her walk. It was gliding, yet mechanical. "Like someone walking in their sleep," as he described it to himself. He felt that a dominating force drew her, and that it emanated from the old man under the archway.

Romney saw her join Mr. Ghool. The old man's hand slipped itself under her arm, and the last that Romney saw of them was the man's grey face looking back out of the gloom of the archway. It touched Romney's quick imagination, suggesting some old classic myth, like that of Prosperine and Pluto.

"The gateway of Hades! Now—why?"

They had disappeared, and the Englishman stood staring before picking up his pack.

"That little wound on her arm? She is afraid of the old satyr. Queer! Yes, more than queer."

III

Romney took the funicular railway from La Turbie to Monte Carlo, and passing through the casino gardens and down the hill to the harbour, ascended into Monaco to a little street where cosmopolitan prices did not prevail.

Madame Le Brun was sitting sewing at her window on the first floor, and Romney's ringing of the bell brought her head and shoulders out of the window. She reminded him of a wooden cuckoo bursting out of the door of a cuckoo-clock.

"Tiens, it is you!"

Romney pulled off his cap.

"Has madame that little room?"

"To be sure. My son left yesterday to return to the barracks at Toulon. I will come down."

To Madame Le Brun Peter Romney was *bon garçon*. She had a large heart and immense energy, a monstache, a collection of moles on her face, and peculiarly beautiful hands. She had a son and a daughter employed in the Great Babylon, pleasant, sophisticated young persons, who looked daily upon the strange life of the place and then

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went home to domesticated wholesomeness. They heard all the gossip; they had their picking out of many of the scandals, and Madame Le Brun knew as much as her children.

She called Monte Carlo—"Le Magazin des Sots." One might be employed there to sell unnecessary luxuries to a number of silly people, but when you had finished your job you returned home and took up your knitting.

She let Romney in.

"So you have come to whistle to us again, monsieur?"

"All the old songs. You know, one must live."

"But last time, if you remember—"

"Yes, I know. I did knock a man down. It was necessary. I may take money from idiots, but I do not take insults from blackguards."

She closed the door, and, leading the way to a little salon, she sat down, and after regarding him with a shrewd and motherly look, she smiled.

"Why have you come back here again?"

"A whim."

"Oh, that sort of thing. You should go where most of the old English ladies and the m'amselles—"

"Madame must not poke fun at my countrywomen!"

"It is kind fun. You see, it is like this. You—who can blush quite prettily—"

"Madame!"

"My dear, it is a great compliment—like the modesty of your charming Prince. And you whistle to the old ladies the dear sentimental things, and they think you romantic."

"I am romantic."

"Exactly. You appeal to the eternal romance in women. You are the interesting vagabond with freckles and a smile. They say: 'Poor fellow, he is a real artist. There must be some mystery.' And they put ten franc notes on the plate."

"They do."

"But here—"

"Yes, that's true."

"You have not a sinful face, or a leer at the back of your eyes, or the stump of a tail sticking out. People bite here, and scratch. It is not a sentimental place."

"Are you sure?"

She met his roguish look.

"So—that's it! You were going to Menton?"

"I was."

"And you digressed?"

"At La Turbie and by the way of the funicular."

"A serious digression."

"How can one tell? Anyhow, I shall try my luck here—no, not at the tables. Someone is in pain, madame."

"Oh, là-là, toujours romantique!"

"Guilty. But, madame, have you ever heard of a gentleman named Monsieur Ghool?"

"Ghool! What a name! No. What sort of a man?"

"A goat-like man with red eyes and a little short-pointed beard, grey, with egg in it. Yes, a rather cruel face."

"It would be—I will ask Edouard."

"The fact is, I want to find out where Monsieur Ghool lives."

"Is he a vampire?"

"Possibly. He looks as though he might have business here."

Romney went up to the little room under the roof with its window looking out upon other roofs and windows with washing hanging from them, and beyond all this cubism, these coloured squares and triangles of wall and tile and wood, he could command the headland of Monaco and the sea. The room was meticulously clean, and it smelt of polish. There was fresh water in the jug, and a towel ready, and when Romney had splashed to his heart's content, he unpacked his knapsack and laid out his belongings on the bed. His kit included a pair of trousers and two fine white shirts, also, that most useful of articles, a "housewife." Buttons will shed themselves, and since Peter Romney proposed to wear his trousers that evening, and they needed attention, he sat down by the window and solemnly plied needle and thread.

Madame Le Brun called up the stairs to him.

"Monsieur, where will you take your supper? With us—*en famille*?"

Romney, with his trousers dangling, replied to her.

"Thank you, madame. I will. By the way, have you one of the local papers with a list of the visitors at the hotels and villas?"

"No."

"Well, I must go out and buy one. Also, I must earn a little money to-night."

Having attended to his trousers he sallied out and bought a paper, and sat on one of the seats in the casino gardens, while the exotic brilliance of the grass and flowers grew less vivid as the dusk came down. The place became lit, and

these gardens seen the artificial light appearing after Romney studied of a big lamp. I name as Ghool, a expected to find i that Mr. Ghool's would not adver pleasure houses, a more likely to be than one of the "

"Wonder what some game. I en ce between a shark."

A woman came seat. She was quietly dressed, a mouth of blood flicking swift gl He rose, and spoke.

"It is Monsiet her. My dear, 'white stuff' on She hailed him and he smiled : his head.

"Sorry, no. I the way, do yo Ghool?"

She gave him. "Never heard

"Oh, perhaps knew him. Goo

He strolled Brun's, and fou in the little sal shirt sleeves, r baby linen. Th

"How far he monsieur?"

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Edouard had was looking at wise brown eye He threw off l his coat.

"Madame la

"Yes, do you

"No."

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"It is an ug

"So is he. had a name li

"Monsieur v

"I'd throw octopus would

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these gardens seemed to re-emerge into the artificial light like women re-appearing after painting their faces. Romney studied his paper by the glare of a big lamp. He could find no such name as Ghool, and perhaps he had not expected to find it. His impression was that Mr. Ghool's villa, wherever it was, would not advertise itself among the pleasure houses, and that Mr. Ghool was more likely to be one of the "bleeders" than one of the "bled."

"Wonder what his game is? He has some game. I ought to know the difference between the codfish and the shark."

A woman came and sat on Romney's seat. She was highly perfumed, but quietly dressed, with a face of chalk and a mouth of blood. She studied Romney, flicking swift glances at him.

He rose, and directly he moved she spoke.

"It is Monsieur le Siffleur. I remember. My dear, have you any of the 'white stuff' on you?"

She hailed him as one of her "world," and he smiled down at her, and shook his head.

"Sorry, no. I don't trade in it. By the way, do you know a man named Ghool?"

She gave him a suspicious glance.

"Never heard of him. Does he—?"

"Oh, perhaps. I wondered if you knew him. Good night."

He strolled back to Madame Le Brun's, and found Edouard and Desirée in the little salon. Edouard was in his shirt sleeves, and Desirée was making baby linen. They welcomed him.

"How far have you been this time, monsieur?"

"Oh, just as far as the casino."

"No, no. On the road?"

"To Tamaris, ma'mselle. Do you know it?"

"Near Toulon. Oh, yes, Etienne has spoken of it."

Edouard had laid aside his paper, and was looking at Romney with his large, wise brown eyes. He was a philosopher. He threw off his cares when he took off his coat.

"Madame la Mère has asked me—"

"Yes, do you know the name?"

"No."

"No one does."

"It is an ugly name."

"So is he. Oh, I'll find out. If I had a name like Ghool—!"

"Monsieur would change it!"

"I'd throw it into the sea. And an octopus would get indigestion."

They supped, and at the end of the meal Romney went up to his room, fastened a blue silk scarf round his throat, ran his hands through his hair, and lit a cigarette. At the door of the salon he loitered a moment to speak to Edouard.

"I shall try some of the hotels. What about the Tartarin? Will they kick me out?"

"Madame Remy runs it. Ask for her—and smile."

"Thanks."

The Hotel Tartarin was one of the quieter hotels, and when Romney entered its sedate vestibule he was stopped by the concierge and asked his business. Romney smiled at him like a friend, breathed a short explanation, and added the potent syllables, "Ten per cent." The concierge understood him, Romney's interest having become his, he went to Madame Remy, who was eating her dinner in her room behind the bureau, and explained to her that the "Siffleur de Provence" wished to serenade her guests, and would madame grant him permission.

Madame came out to have a look at Peter, and liking his freckles and his faint flushes and his smile, she gave him her benediction.

"At a quarter to nine—in the lounge. And you will wish to make a collection?"

"With madame's permission. We have to live. But I will give a quarter of it to the 'Crippled Soldiers.'"

"Good. At a quarter to nine."

Romney took a chair in the vestibule, and whistled soft tunes to one of the page-boys. He had a view of the lounge, which was on a lower level than the vestibule, a long and narrow room, all mirrors, gilding, and red velvet. The guests of the Tartarin were emerging from the *salle-a-manger*, and taking their favourite chairs round the wicker-work tables. Waiters hurried in with trays of coffee.

Romney was watching the glass doors of the *salle-a-manger*. He saw the *maitre d'hotel* open one of the leaves of the door, and bow and smile to a big man with a bald head, a man with a double chin and weak eyes magnified by high-powered pince-nez. The fat fellow had had friends dining with him, and he was shepherding them out into the lounge, his chubby and rather foolish face shining with well-fed benignity.

Romney pursed up his lips as though to whistle, for the fat fellow's guests were Pansy and Mr. Ghool.

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IV.

PETER ROMNEY'S years numbered seven-and-twenty, but in his knowledge of the world, and especially of that world in which queer people manage to live on the lapses and weaknesses of the respectable and the wealthy, he was much older than his years. Yet he had kept his boyishness, his wholesome zest in life. All the various forms of hyper-civilized sottishness repelled him, for he was a child of the open air.

So, as he sat in the vestibule of the Hotel Tartarin, partly screened by a palm in a huge faience pot, and observed the fat man and his two guests, he was not long in getting the "atmosphere" of the group. He disliked it. He disliked the two men, for it seemed to him that one of them was engaged in fooling the other, and even this particular form of foolishness was unpleasant.

Romney watched the girl, and as he watched her the strange and instant appeal that had flashed upon him outside La Reserve grew more urgent and generous. Her face was expressionless. She sat there like a wax figure in a costumier's window, while the fat fellow burred and beamed, and gave her absurd and tender glances through his high-powered glasses.

A figure of white wax, with midnight eyes, and a red and plaintive mouth! Yes, she seemed a figure of wax, and Mr. Ghool was the modeller. The plastic youth of her was shaped by his hands.

Romney lit a cigarette, and frowned at the smoke he blew from it.

Queer! Yes, more than queer. Mere queerness would not have piqued him, or brought him into the affair as a passionate partizan. He was old enough to know that a baby face may be the most deceptive of masks, and that the angel mouth may be full of astonishing blasphemies. But there was something in him that stood up stoutly and claimed that still, silent girl as a creature of whiteness.

He glanced at the clock on the wall. A quarter to nine! With an air of grave involvement he stood up and threw his cigarette end into the palm pot, and, walking towards the open doors of the lounge, he paused at the top of the steps and began to whistle.

"Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean—

Tears from the depths of some divine despair."

He saw Pansy start in her chair. It was as though she had been asleep, and his whistling had broken her sleep. Her eyes rose swiftly to his; the wax of her face took on a tinge of colour.

He transferred his glance to the face of Mr. Ghool. The lounge was brilliantly lit, and the face of Mr. Ghool stood out against the folds of a red velvet curtain. The eyebrows were raised slightly over the red eyes; the mouth was whimsical, with touches of cruel humour. Mr. Ghool appeared both surprised and amused. He fingered the rusty ochre of his beard, and said something to his stout friend with the glasses.

Romney descended two of the steps, and, cap in hand, smiling, he bowed to the room.

"Mesdames, messieurs, by the kind permission of Madame Remy, and with your consent, I will try and show you how a man can make music out of whistling."

There were smiles and slight hand-clapping from some of the women. Most of the men looked bored, or vaguely resentful. These "entertainers" were a nuisance.

Romney smiled.

"Please, I do not wish to interfere with anybody's conversation. Music while you eat, or music while you talk, ladies and gentlemen. I enjoy my own music, so no one need pity me."

He caught the sheep-like eyes of the fat fellow staring up at him, and they quickened in him the spirit of audacity and mischief. He threw back his head and laughed, and bursting into that merry, swaggering old tune, "Soldiers in the Park," he came down the last two steps and began a gaillard promenade between the chairs and tables. His eyes roved round the room, and for a time he avoided glancing at the three people who interested him.

Mr. Ghool was lighting a cigar. The whistling appeared to irritate him, and he leant upon the arm of his chair and jerked a foot. He had a sidelong view for Pansy, who was watching Romney's feet as though she dared not look higher.

The fat man, whose name was Budd, made playful conversation.

"Whistling Rufus—what? How do you like it?"

"He whistles very well."

She was shy of Mr. Budd, and she did not like him.

"Yes. These people seem to think us a lot of children. I wonder they don't

bring in a Punc Does it bore you, G Ghool's maxillan his thin lips.

"My dear sir, aft Psychism and food

"I suppose that a move whenever y back with you. M

"Of course. We the girl is in a go

"By the way, I show you. It h photographs, ect

Supposing you cor "Delighted."

"Miss Pansy ca steam-engine."

"Yes," and Gho lips; "she will be

Budd rose, and, asked her to e minutes.

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She made a sli ment of the head, up the red carpe the lift. The doc as the doors close temper of his mus to reflect, whistle and then addresse

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He wandered moments with suddenly he beg he had whistled narrow street at look at the gir room with a di paused.

"Is it correc

She made a clasping her ha

"Quite correc

The room app

By Warwick Deeping

bring in a Punch and Judy show. Does it bore you, Ghool?"

Ghool's maxillary muscles retracted his thin lips.

"My dear sir, after a good dinner—! Psychism and food do not harmonize."

"I suppose that's so. We will make a move whenever you wish. I'm coming back with you. May I?"

"Of course. We might try. I think the girl is in a good mood."

"By the way, I have a book I want to show you. It has some remarkable photographs, ectoplasm—you know. Supposing you come up to my room?"

"Delighted."

"Miss Pansy can listen to this young steam-engine."

"Yes," and Ghool's tongue brushed his lips; "she will be all right."

Budd rose, and, bending over the girl, asked her to excuse them for five minutes.

"I want to show Mr. Ghool a book."

She made a slight, consenting movement of the head, and the two men went up the red carpeted stairs and entered the lift. The doors closed on them, and as the doors closed Romney changed the temper of his music. He paused, seemed to reflect, whistled a few bars of a song, and then addressed the room.

"Perhaps—someone will choose a piece of music. Mademoiselle, here?"

He stood by her chair, smiling. She was sitting a little apart from the nearest group, and for a moment her eyes lifted to his.

"I cannot think of a tune, monsieur."

He stood attentive, respectful.

"The Street where my Lady lives."

Do you know that song?"

Her eyelids flickered.

"The rue Rodin. Oh, how silly of me. I thought—"

He straightened, smiling.

"Mademoiselle here has set me a puzzle. It is to whistle the tune she has running in her head. I will try. Musical telepathy, messieurs et mesdames."

He wandered up and down for a few moments with a rapt look. And then suddenly he began to whistle the song he had whistled in the shadow of the narrow street at La Turbie. He did not look at the girl; he drifted about the room with a dreamy air. Presently he paused.

"Is it correct, mademoiselle?"

She made a movement of the head, clasping her hands together in her lap.

"Quite correct, monsieur."

The room applauded.

Romney paused in front of a smiling old Englishwoman. He bowed.

"Would madame think of a tune?"

She agreed, but this time Romney did not get it, and he covered his failure with one of his half-shy and half-audacious smiles.

"Perhaps madame is too classical for me."

He began another tune, and as he began it he saw the lift descending. It came to rest; the page opened the doors, and Mr. Ghool and his friend stepped out. Ghool was saying something to Mr. Budd, and a smile passed between them.

"Yes, there is extraordinary sympathy between us. Shall I give you a proof?"

"Do."

"We will stand here in the vestibule and I will will her to join us. She will come up the steps and say: 'Mr. Budd, we have had a most delightful evening.'"

"Splendid."

Romney saw all that happened. The girl had turned her chair so that her profile was towards the vestibule, nor had she seen the two men emerge from the lift. And again, as at La Turbie, she made a sudden quick movement as though someone had touched her, and, turning her head, looked up at Mr. Ghool. She rose, still gazing in the direction of the vestibule, and moving towards the steps ascended them with that slow and gliding movement.

Romney had stopped whistling, but as she reached the top of the steps he broke into the song that had become like a bird call between them. She heard it; she turned her head slightly to one side, and seemed to hesitate, like an automaton whose machinery falters momentarily. Then she went on and out into the vestibule to where the two men were standing.

Her eyes were fixed on Ghool's eyes, held by them. They blinked, and hers blinked in response. She gave Mr. Budd a vague smile.

"Mr. Budd, we have had a most delightful evening."

V

ROMNEY whistled one more tune, keeping the group in the vestibule under observation, and as he made his last circuit of the Tartarin lounge he invited largesse, holding out his blue cap. But he was excited, and once or twice some of his notes were flat and hurried, for he had seen in Ghool and the girl a reproduction in real life of the tale of

The Whistling Troubadour

Svengali and Trilby. He had no doubt at all that the man dominated Pansy, and that he made some use of her, and that his power inspired terror.

He made his bow to the lounge of the Tartarin, and ascended the steps leading to the vestibule. Budd was helping Pansy on with her cloak, and Ghool, cigar in mouth, was looking in a mirror and pretending to adjust his scarf. Peter displayed the smiling hardihood of the vagabond and the player. He held out his cap to Mr. Budd, and wished him good luck.

"Bon chance, monsieur."

Budd dropped a five franc-note into the blue cap, and Peter, wishing them good night, made a hurried escape into the bureau, where the concierge was waiting for him. He had no time to count his money and to apportion to the concierge his proper share, for the party in the vestibule was ready to leave, and it was Romney's intention to leave five seconds after them.

"Here, *mon ami*, I am in a hurry, take a handful of the stuff."

The concierge looked amused. He had a quick eye, and he had noticed something lying on the red carpet of the vestibule.

"M'amselle has dropped her flowers."

He pocketed his share of the money, and smiled as he watched "Le Siffleur" dash out into the vestibule and pick up a bunch of violets.

"My perquisite."

"Bien!"

Romney threw him a friendly glance, and disappeared through the glass doors into the night. He had the bunch of violets in his hand, and over his head a sky that was dusted with stars. The violets touched his lips, and as he inhaled the scent of them he felt assured that the flowers had not dropped by chance. But for the moment the pursuit was the thing that mattered, and ahead of him, and passing under a street lamp, he saw three figures.

"The rue Rodin."

He set out to shadow the three, and the pursuit took him up past the gardens and along the Corniche to the right. He kept on the opposite pavement and about thirty yards behind Ghool, Mr. Budd and the girl. Presently he saw them disappear into a side street on the left, and from that point began a slow climb among the maze of houses rising above the sea. Mr. Budd was slow on his feet, and Romney had to dawdle and hang back under the shadow of the houses.

Presently they turned again to the left, and on a plate fastened to a villa wall close to a lamp Romney saw the words—"Rue Rodin." He became more cautious. He could hear the voices of the two men, but the street was badly lit, and he was afraid of blundering upon them and raising their suspicions. He was aware of a blur ahead of him on the pavement, and then—he heard the slamming of a door.

They had entered.

He walked quickly on, and coming to the door of the villa which he imagined to be Mr. Ghool's, he examined it for some sign of a name or a number. It was a solid door, and on it he saw something white, like a slip of pasteboard, or a visiting-card, slipped into a brass frame.

Romney stood back and examined the house before he struck a match, and held it close to the card.

"Monsieur Ghool, *Medecin Psychique*."

Romney blew out the match and threw it into the roadway.

"So that's it. I think I'm beginning to understand."

VI

A very faint and rosy glow was diffused through the room by a lamp that burned on a pedestal in the corner, yet so dim was the light that the faces of the three people seated at the table were like grey masks. The table was a small one, and oblong in shape. At the head of it Pansy half reclined in a high-backed arm-chair, eyes closed, lips parted. Her hands were on the table. Ghool, on her right, held one of them, Mr. Budd, who sat opposite him, the other.

The "sitting" was at an end, and there was a faint stirring of the girl's figure. She began to draw deep breaths, and to make a little, plaintive moaning.

Budd's sheep's eyes looked big and staring behind his glasses.

"Extraordinary!"

Ghool shook his head at him.

"Don't talk yet. Draw your hand away gently. She is coming back."

They sat and watched the girl recovering from her trance, and somewhere in the room a clock ticked. Budd had withdrawn his hand, and was feeling in the breast pocket of his coat for his wallet. His thick lips moved as though he were repeating some words which he did not wish to forget. Ghool, leaning across the table, whispered to him.

"We will slip out before she is quite herself. She is rather sensitive—about

being watched—when she is. Some psychics are."

Budd nodded.

"I want to make a few extraordinary; facts known else."

"Yes, downstairs."

In the rue Rodin Peter found a gateway nearly house of Mr. Ghool, and himself here—well in the had been watching the shutters were closed, and able to detect no light rooms, but after an hour had seen a yellow radiance through the bars of the sing the windows of the ground floor. The house things were happening in

He waited, and now raised that bunch of nostrils, and their perfume his thoughts.

The front door opened, men came out. Mr. Budd appeared excited, held Ghool

"Of course, I am considerably remarkable. But, look he with me."

"As far as the gardens."

"Good. I suppose she"

"Oh, quite. So you have my idea of getting indications

"Why, of course; it's ordinary possibilities. Some of the 'suicides' come

"They do. They are The 'rooms' are full of them

They went off down the Romney remained in his

spired by the mad idea of the house while Ghool

calculated that it would men a quarter of an hour

gardens, and that the client absorb another twenty

an hour—or more! He way, crossed the street

Ghool's door, but it was "medicin psychique" used

Romney returned to him "If someone—she—was

window!"

And then—that which for—happened.

He heard the click of a creak of hinges, and one swung back from an

A faint, reddish glow filled and he could see the

a figure, and daring the assumed it to be the girl

He whistled a bar of

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being watched—when she has come back. Some psychics are."

Budd nodded.

"I want to make a few notes. Most extraordinary; facts known to no one else."

"Yes, downstairs."

In the rue Rodin Peter Romney had found a gateway nearly opposite the house of Mr. Ghool, and had posted himself here—well in the shadow—and had been watching the windows. The shutters were closed, and he had been able to detect no light in the front rooms, but after an hour's watching he had seen a yellow radiance diffuse itself through the bars of the shutters covering the windows of the room on the ground floor. The house was alive; things were happening in it.

He waited, and now and again he raised that bunch of flowers to his nostrils, and their perfume was part of his thoughts.

The front door opened, and the two men came out. Mr. Budd, who appeared excited, held Ghool by the arm.

"Of course, I am convinced. Most remarkable. But, look here, walk back with me."

"As far as the gardens."

"Good. I suppose she will be—?"

"Oh, quite. So you can infer that my idea of getting indications—"

"Why, of course; it suggests extraordinary possibilities. And you say some of the 'suicides' communicate?"

"They do. They are earth-bound. The 'rooms' are full of them."

They went off down the street, and Romney remained in his gateway, inspired by the mad idea of getting into the house while Ghool was away. He calculated that it would take the two men a quarter of an hour to reach the gardens, and that the climb back would absorb another twenty minutes. Half an hour—or more! He left his gateway, crossed the street, and tried Ghool's door, but it was locked. The "medicin psychique" used a latchkey.

Romney returned to his gateway.

"If someone—she—would open a window!"

And then—that which he had hoped for—happened.

He heard the click of a catch and the creak of hinges, and one of the shutters swung back from an upper window. A faint, reddish glow filled the window, and he could see the vague outline of a figure, and daring the inference, he assumed it to be the girl's.

He whistled a bar of that song.

He saw the figure move; the shutter began to close, but it did not close completely, and he came out into the street and continued the song. Again he saw the band of light broaden, and the slatted frame swung open. She was leaning out.

"Oh, please—please, Mr. Romney—"

He ceased whistling, and stood looking up.

"I am afraid it is rather late to pay a call—"

"Oh, please go away."

She was frightened, and her fear made him more bold. He glanced down the dark street.

"Pansy, you dropped your flowers in the hotel."

"Did I?"

"May I keep them?"

"Yes—yes, if you will go away."

He moved to the path under the window, and his voice climbed to her pleadingly.

"Yes, I will go away. It is late. Mr. Ghool has gone down as far as the gardens with his friend. But I want you to tell me—"

He saw the shutter move, and he held up a hand.

"Give me one minute. Yes, I know, it must sound absurd, when I have only seen you three times in a day. But I am not a cad, and you can talk to me. Pansy, don't go. Yes, I'll go now, but when can I see you—"

She rested her bosom on the sill.

"Oh, I don't know. Never. He—"

And she closed the shutter, and Romney knew that her fear had shut him out, but just as the fear in her eyes had been the first thing about her that had appealed to him, so now it sent the blood more strongly from his heart. The shutters might be closed, but they could not keep out the human voice.

"I'm sorry, Pansy. Don't be angry with me. But—I must—see you again. Tell me when I can see you, and I will go."

He waited, watching the street, feeling her fear and trying both to understand and to combat it.

"You need not be afraid. I'm not a cad."

Her soft voice seemed to fall from among the stars.

"I am not afraid of you. It is something else. But at eight o'clock each morning—"

"Yes."

"I go marketing. The Magazin de Paris."

The Whistling Troubadour

"I shall not forget. And now—I am going—but I have your flowers."

When he had gone she opened the shutters, and, folding her arms on the window-sill, she let her head fall on them as though her strength and her courage failed her. She remained there, quite motionless, without a sound, her face hidden, a vague despair in her heart.

Yes, she was afraid, afraid to love and to be loved, afraid of his voice, of his music, of his happy and half-shy smile. What misery was hers! To feel herself shut up in a cage, a slave spirit, a poor, shameful, singing bird that was used as a decoy. What chance had she of being anything else, she who had been snatched from nothingness by this terrible old man? He had taken her childhood, and made it grow to suit his own ends, like a plant set in a window.

She felt a sudden fury against him. She put her lips to that wound on her wrist, and made the blood flow. Yet, even in her passionate anger there was fear.

She was still seated at the open window when John Ghool returned. She did not move, but remained with her back to him, listening to his movements, and imagining his sly, tyrannous smile.

"Well, my dear child, you did very well."

She shivered. A sudden loathing of him and the life they led blew through her like a wind. It was as though Romney's voice, his blackbird's call, had brought all the poignant beauty and cleanness of the spring.

"It's horrible!"

Her voice had a fierce yet frightened huskiness, and old Ghool, who had been moving about the room, stood still, observing her.

"What's that? What's the matter?"

She pressed her chin against the soft curve of her forearm.

"What you make me do. Playing upon people, pretending— Oh, you know!"

"Don't talk nonsense. We give people what they want, that's all. Besides, it's real."

"Real?"

"Yes, your power. You are psychic, a little prophetic. Why not be proud of it?"

"Proud! How do I know? You send me to sleep, but I feel—"

"You see—things. You saw things to-night that amazed our friend—"

Her shoulders jerked.

"Yes, and he gave you money. They all give you money. It's wrong. You trade on it. If I have this strange power—"

He came and stood over her, and she felt him there, and the soul and body of her winced.

"Don't—don't hit me. I won't bear it—not to-night. I may be nothing better than a monkey."

He laid a hand on her shoulder.

"A little emotional—to-night! Go to bed. Don't let us have any more of this nonsense."

VII

At a quarter to eight Peter Romney was loitering outside the flower-shop opposite the *Magazin de Paris* with Pansy's bunch of violets pinned to his cap. The little swarthy lady who managed the flower-shop came out and smiled upon him, for it was possible that this romantic loiterer might have looked into her eyes.

"Some flowers, monsieur?"

Romney surveyed the carnations, the tulips, the anemones, the roses.

"Yes, that is an idea, m'amselle. How much are those roses—the deep carmine ones?"

"Two francs each, monsieur."

"Oh, là-là! Well, give me three."

He was slipping the change from a ten franc-note into his pocket when he saw a girl emerge from a side street and walk towards the *Magazin de Paris*. It was Pansy; she carried a capacious string-bag, and her eyes had a look of haste.

Romney crossed the road. She saw him, and for a moment she appeared to falter, but when he smiled she seemed to take courage and to dare the adventure. She saw the bunch of violets in his cap.

"I was afraid you might not come."

She stood looking up at him, and when she spoke her voice suggested hurry and breathlessness.

"I have so little time. You see, I have to do the marketing and get back."

"And make Mr. Ghool's coffee?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

"Intuition. He gets up late and expects you to be ready to take him his coffee and fresh rolls—"

"Well, he adopted me. It is my part. Please, I mustn't wait—"

She fluttered past him towards the door of the shop, and he went with her.

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"I'll do the waiting. And then I'll carry your bag."

He lit a cigarette and stared into the shop window while Pansy was buying her fruit and groceries and the little highly flavoured delicacies beloved of Mr. Ghool. She was agitated; she kept glancing at the door, and when she went to the desk to pay for her purchases she dropped part of the money on the floor. And when she emerged she clutched her bag and looked at Romney with eyes of alarm.

He held out a hand for the bag.

"Please—"

"No, I'll carry it. And really—you mustn't—"

But with a smiling gentleness he took the heavy bag from her, and offered her the roses.

"You carry these. I bought them for you. More your style."

Her eyes were all light and shadow.

"I'll hold them while— But you must take them back again. You see— I—"

He was looking down at her with a big, grave tenderness.

"You little thing, why are you so frightened? I won't come the whole way. But there is one thing I mean to find out."

She walked fast, gazing straight ahead.

"I'm not frightened."

"Is it anything to be ashamed of? Oh—I mean, there is nothing to be ashamed of in my wanting to walk with you, is there? I may be a sort of vagabond, but in these days—"

Her face betrayed a sudden, timid fierceness.

"Oh, we are all vagabonds—worse. Not you. You just—make music."

His eyes grew more grave under a faint frown.

"Supposing we grant that. And Mr. Ghool calls himself a psychic doctor—"

"Don't, please. I don't wish— Besides—"

"Well?"

"I have known you only since yesterday. What's that? Just nothing. Now, if you go away, it will be just nothing—"

He smiled.

"Now, that's just what it won't be. Things happen queerly—sometimes—Pansy. I'm superstitious, and there is something queer in my meeting you. A serious sort of queerness, just as though it were meant. I'm not going away."

She gave him a frightened stare.

"But—it would be— Oh, I can't say what I mean. And you have come far enough. Please go back."

She was trembling, and feeling that he was making her suffer, he gave her the bag.

"Do you want me to go away? For good, I mean?"

"Yes, I do. Really. Only I—"

She fled, forgetting to give him back the roses, but her eyes had contradicted all that her frightened voice had said.

Romney walked slowly back to the gardens, and at this early hour he had them to himself. He sat on a seat in the sun and watched the pigeons, and a waiter dusting the tables outside the Café de Paris, and his vagabond philosophy found itself at the cross-roads. What was he going to do? Was this adventure of a day so serious that he must needs leap into it—as youth has always leapt, blindly yet with a cry of exultation? A little pale-faced girl with dusky hair and frightened eyes! What was her appeal? Her fear, and the strangeness of it, looking up into the eyes of his strength?

"I suppose one never knows why the thing happens," he reflected. "That it does happen—is enough."

He thought of her slight figure hurrying away from him, and her carrying off those red roses, nor did he suspect that the colour of them was to be the colour of pain. Pansy had arrived with a sense of breathlessness at the door of the house on the rue Rodin. She left the door open when she went on her early morning marketing, and as she entered the little vestibule and put her bag down on a chair, she realized that she was still clutching Peter Romney's roses. Instinctively, she raised them to her lips, telling herself that she dared not keep these dear flowers, unless, of course, she hid them.

"Ha! you have been buying flowers," said a voice.

Terrified, she glanced at the staircase, and saw Ghool standing there watching her. Some whim or motive had pulled him out of bed; he was in his sloppy grey pyjamas, and his rusty hair hung over his forehead.

"Yes," she said, "just three roses."

He came slowly down the stairs, and the soul of her crouched like a frightened bird. Her dark eyes were raised to his face, as though fear held her fascinated.

"Pretty," he said, "very pretty."

The Whistling Troubadour

His thin smile changed to a snarl. He snatched the flowers from her, and, pulling the heads from the stalks, threw them on the floor.

"Don't try fibs on me. I'm not such a fool. Who was it gave them to you?"

"I bought them."

"Very nice! That fool Budd, was it?"

"No. Why won't you believe—"

"I never believe a woman. Kisses—! You can tell the man who gave you the flowers that he is a fool. You belong to me."

He seized her by one wrist and twisted it.

"You understand that? You belong to me, body and soul. You will always belong to me."

"Yes—yes, oh, you are hurting me!"

He flung her back against the wall.

"Fudge. You are my property. I can do what I like with you, and you know it. Go and make the coffee."

VIII

For three mornings Peter Romney waited outside the *Magazin de Paris*, but no Pansy appeared with her frightened eyes and her string bag, and though he haunted the rue Rodin he had no glimpse of her. Ghool he saw strolling down towards the casino, with his red eyes set upon some dubious enterprise, and his thin lips sucking a cigar.

Yet, these three days proved to Romney how serious was the thing that had happened to him.

"She is afraid," he thought; "or, perhaps, that old beast has locked her in. That stain in his beard makes one think of clotted blood."

Meanwhile, he had heard things from Edouard Le Brun, fragments of gossip that drift about in the world below the world of Monte Carlo. Edouard was discreet; he had an ear, and many friends, and Mr. Ghool, in spite of his surreptitious shrewdness, had aroused some curiosity.

"He is one of the 'high-brow gentlemen,' *mon ami*. He is fashionable. Psychism. They say he keeps a medium, a little clairvoyante."

The details of the picture were becoming more definite, and also more poignant and appealing. He saw Pansy as a bird in a cage, a frightened and obedient bird whom this old gentleman brought out to play occult tricks

upon his patrons. He dominated her. She was an enslaved soul exploited by this old charlatan.

But was he charlatan? Or was he a man who used powers that are becoming recognized, and twisted them to his own ingenious ends? He played a psychic organ, and the girl was his little monkey, trembling, obedient.

Romney grew grim.

"If I have to go down like Orpheus into Hades—!"

On the fourth morning he was more fortunate, for she came shrinking swiftly along the pavement, and when she saw him she hesitated and stood at gaze. Romney walked slowly up to her, almost expecting her to turn and run, but this morning he saw a new expression in her eyes.

"You still come here? I thought—"

"Each morning. For three mornings I have been disappointed."

"I thought you would grow tired."

"Did you want me to grow tired?"

She avoided his eyes and the frankness of their challenge.

"No. But, you see, he saw the roses. He suspected. For three days he made me—"

Romney turned with her, and his hand touched her arm.

"You little thing, why won't you tell me what it is? He is cruel to you."

"I dare not say—"

"Why, then, you are telling me what I wish to know. You and I have got to understand each other, Pansy. An old man does not frighten me."

She gave him a helpless look.

"But, you don't know."

"I'm going to know."

He slipped his arm under hers, and, realizing that his courage and hardihood would have to dominate her fear, he led her past the doorway of the shop.

"You are coming down into the gardens for twenty minutes, to sit on a seat—and talk."

He had expected her to resist, but that grip of his had seemed to dominate her, to persuade towards a crisis that filled her with both desire and terror. They went down to the gardens and into the sunlight like two lovers, and Romney chose a seat that was aloof from the main walk.

"Sit down, little thing."

"But if he should find out?"

"Let him. A girl has a right to have a lover."

She hid her face from him.

"Oh, but if you know wish—"

"Tell me. Is he? You owe him nothing. I can't."

He laid a hand on

"Tell me. I think stand. He picked y were about three fe since—calling himsel has made you—"

He felt her trembl

"He makes me ear

There was a lie Romney's eyes.

"How, dear?"

"I'm what they People come to learn on the money."

There was quick Romney's eyes.

"Ah, that's it. Bu nothing—"

"But it's not re mean."

"You have to pret

"Sometimes. He t to say, and I know to cheat."

"Always?"

"No, not always. right off into a d wishes it. He can m

I can't resist. It's l Romney felt for her

"How long has th dear?"

"Ever since I was

"And he drags you

"He says that I be and soul, and that I s to him. Sometimes—

Romney's hand clos

"We'll put an en look at your wrist. member, outside that saw you, you gave pain?"

"It was his penkn why he is so cruel."

"Cruel to you! Sc apes or tigers."

Presently she grew rue Rodin Mr. Ghool for his coffee, but a back with her to the he was thinking th very soon Pansy mig marketing and never

Gently he hinted adventure.

"When you have g little better, *ma che me—*"

By Warwick Deeping

"Oh, but if you knew, you would not wish—"

"Tell me. Is he a beast to you? You owe him nothing if he is—"

"I can't."

He laid a hand on her shoulder.

"Tell me. I think I shall understand. He picked you up when you were about three feet high, and ever since—calling himself your father—he has made you—"

He felt her trembling.

"He makes me earn money."

There was a hidden grimness in Romney's eyes.

"How, dear?"

"I'm what they call a 'medium.' People come to learn things. We live on the money."

There was quick brightening of Romney's eyes.

"Ah, that's it. But, Pansy, there is nothing—"

"But it's not real—not always—I mean."

"You have to pretend?"

"Sometimes. He tells me what I am to say, and I know I am helping him to cheat."

"Always?"

"No, not always. Sometimes I go right off into a deep sleep. If he wishes it. He can make me. Somehow, I can't resist. It's horrible."

Romney felt for her hand.

"How long has this been going on, dear?"

"Ever since I was fifteen."

"And he drags you about with him?"

"He says that I belong to him, body and soul, and that I shall always belong to him. Sometimes—he beats me."

Romney's hand closed hard on hers.

"We'll put an end to that. Let's look at your wrist. Yes. Do you remember, outside that café, when I first saw you, you gave a sudden start of pain?"

"It was his penknife. I don't know why he is so cruel."

"Cruel to you! Some men are born apes or tigers."

Presently she grew restless, for in the rue Rodin Mr. Ghool would be waiting for his coffee, but as Romney walked back with her to the *Magazin de Paris* he was thinking that some morning very soon Pansy might set out on her marketing and never return.

Gently he hinted at the ultimate adventure.

"When you have got to know me a little better, *ma chérie*, and to trust me—"

"But I do trust you."

"Do you? That's great. But I must earn a little more money here, and then—"

His downward glance caressed her.

"But—he—will never let me go," she said.

"Oh, won't he! If you and I get married—some day, Pansy—well, Mr. Ghool won't be able to bully my wife."

When she had completed her shopping Romney went with her as far as the end of the street leading into the rue Rodin, and here he took leave of her.

"Till to-morrow, little thing. Trust me."

Romney strolled back to the gardens, and making his way to the seat where Pansy had told him her life story, he sat down and considered her problem and his. Evidently old Ghool had an almost hypnotic influence over her, and that influence had to be broken, and if love could not break it, what else could?

"Seems I have got to fight for my little mate."

He was absorbed, and though he was aware of someone sitting down on the other end of the seat he did not glance at the person who had arrived.

"Good morning, Monsieur le Siffleur."

Romney turned quickly. The man who had joined him on the seat was Mr. Ghool.

IX

THERE was no need for Peter Romney to infer that the "*Medecin Psychique*" had taken an early and an experimental stroll in order to discover whether Pansy had a lover, and if so, who that lover was, for Ghool, smiling that acid smile of his, began with an ironical frankness.

"So you are interested in my daughter, and I suppose she has been telling you—"

He paused to light a cigarette, leaning an elbow on the back of the seat, and facing Romney with complete yet casual assurance.

"Something, yes."

"Ah!" said Mr. Ghool with a glint of his red eyes, "the feminine mind is a wonderful contraption. You and I had better be quite frank with each other. Now, of course, you know—the girl is a hopeless liar."

He appeared amused, watching Romney's grave face.

"Sorry to spoil illusions. But, you see, Pansy is not quite normal. She is

The Whistling Troubadour

what we call psychic, yes, genuinely so. I discovered her mediumistic powers——"

"And you use them?"

"Exactly. Why not? You whistle money out of people's pockets; I make it materialize more subtly. Now, as I was saying, the girl is not quite normal; she cannot tell the truth, and you may as well know——"

Romney laid a brown hand on the seat and bent nearer to Mr. Ghool.

"Look here, sir, supposing I don't believe you?"

"Well, that's your affair, not mine. It won't concern me in the very least. The girl belongs to me."

He spoke with peculiar emphasis, showing his teeth.

"Probably you don't realize the situation, but I am warning you—in order to save unnecessary trouble. The girl belongs to me. Do you understand?"

"You mean, that you have made her a sort of slave?"

"No, no, not quite that. But my will is hers. She will do what I wish her to do. I control her. See?"

Romney remained silent.

"Well, there you have it. No nice young petticoat-hunter has a chance with her, even though he can whistle like a blackbird. I simply use my influence——"

"You hypnotize her; or, rather——"

"Well? Be frank."

"You use fear, cruelty."

Ghool smiled.

"Come, come, I see she has been romancing. My methods are not quite so crude. My mind dominates her. It is just as well that you should realize this—face the facts. Besides——"

He blew smoke, his voice became slightly menacing.

"Besides, the girl is useful to me. It has taken me years to train her. Do you think I am going to allow a young pup to come gambolling in? Oh, no, my dear sir. I shall keep her."

"Perhaps!"

"You don't think so? Well, that is rather unkind of you. Why not consider the girl? Because——"

He rapped the seat with his knuckles.

"Because, you see, her happiness depends on me. If I willed her to do it she would——"

He paused and looked steadily into Romney's eyes.

"Yes, all sorts of things. She would take a lover, any sort of man, fat—like our friend Mr. Budd. Yes, or she would

walk over a cliff or get down in front of a train."

Romney's eyes grew fierce.

"You would make her sell herself? You——"

Ghool held up his cigarette.

"Now—now, abuse is ungentlemanly. I am merely making my position plain to you. I am completely in earnest, my dear sir. The girl belongs to me. She will continue to belong to me. And if you persist——"

They eyed each other.

"I think I can prove to you that my influence is more potent than yours. So I should advise discretion."

"Thanks."

"There are plenty of pretty girls in Monte Carlo. For instance, that swarthy creature who sold you those roses——"

Romney stood up.

"All right. Thanks for your quite beastly frankness. I'll think it over. Good morning."

And he left Ghool lounging on the seat in the early sunshine.

Now, it was obvious to Romney that the man was thoroughly in earnest, and that he had no intention of losing Pansy, but as to the girl being a liar, Romney did not believe it. He had his own reasons for not believing it, and her fear was the best proof of her exploiter's cruelty. Ghool was a cruel beast, an adventurer; you saw his cruelty in his mouth and in his eyes. Nor was there any doubt that he could be dangerous, or that his boast was an empty one, and that the child was wax in his hands.

Romney felt savage, but that smile of his saved him from the stupidity of the savage. He walked in the direction of Monaco, and paused to lean against the parapet and to watch the yachts and steamers and coasting vessels in the harbour, and it occurred to him that a romantic disappearance on some tramp steamer would go a long way towards puzzling Mr. Ghool. Yes, but such an inspiration was double-headed. Ghool might disappear, taking Pansy with him.

Romney watched the motor-boat racing seawards with a froth of whiteness at its bow.

"Seems to me possession is the thing," he reflected. "At present—he has the advantage. But what if I take her from him? What could he do?"

It appeared to Romney that in such case Ghool would be helpless, unless he

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Wm P Tab



GUARANTEED
PURE

Wm. P. Hartley



By Warwick Deeping

could make use of that very sinister influence he claimed to hold over the girl. He could not go to the police and say: "A fellow has run away with and married my 'medium.'" Moreover, it was probable that Mr. Ghool was not a person who had any desire to advertise himself to the police.

Meanwhile, he would go home, and if he so chose, make the girl's life a hell.

"I have got to get her out of it," was Romney's decision. "What queer things we are! All this has happened in less than a week."

He returned to the rue Albi and found Madame le Brun just back from marketing and ready for activities in the kitchen. Romney had a great respect for her solidity, her kindliness, and her good sense. She was the sort of woman who, once enlisted on your side, would hold the gate with serene determination. She would sit in the doorway and keep twenty Mr. Ghools outside in the street.

Romney sat down.

"Madame, I am in trouble."

"Money?"

"No. I'm in love."

Madame looked at him as she might have looked at a child that was developing a skin rash.

"I thought that you were a philosopher."

"So I am. But when a philosopher falls in love, *ma foi!*"

"True," she said. "The real thing—a high temperature! Poor Monsieur Peter!"

"Well, madame, since I have no mother I will tell you how it is. You may be able to help me."

So he told her the whole story, and she sat solidly on one of the painted chairs and regarded him with baffling seriousness. She sighed. She gave occasional shrugs of the shoulders. And when he had finished she addressed him as though he were a helpless boy, but a boy who would have to be humoured. Love is a dementia, a blaze, a cataract, and women respect it.

"I see you are quite mad, madder than most. But you would be. Romantic! Oh, *là-là!* And what do you want me to do?"

"Take Pansy into your house."

"*Mon Dieu!*"

"She will be safe here, until I can arrange things. Of course, I will pay. But you are just the woman, madame."

"Oh, am I? You sly rogue! And what about the scandal?"

"Why should there be any scandal? She can have my room, and I will get a

room close by. This fellow is not going to be too intimate with the police."

Of course, she said it was absurd, impossible, and then proceeded to surrender. Monsieur Peter need not give up his room. There was an extra bed in Desiree's room, and if the girl came she could sleep with Desiree. Her daughter was persuadable.

"And when do you expect it to happen?"

"Just as soon as I can arrange it, madame. This old man is a cruel devil, and I want to get her away from him."

"It may not be so easy. Old men are sly."

"I have an idea. Edouard will help me. But, madame, you are what we call in English 'a sport.'"

"Oh, yes, you babies have to be humoured."

Romney went up to his room, and, sitting on the bed, pondered a plan. He was greatly troubled about Pansy, and he realized that she might be too scared to dare the adventure with him. Very well, he would carry her off in the good old-fashioned way. Obviously, his plan would be to invade the house while Ghool was out of it, but that might not be easy. It was probable that Pansy would not be allowed to go marketing alone, that Ghool might keep her shut up in the house.

Romney went out to explore the environs of the rue Rodin. The street cut across the slope of the hill, and above it was another roadway dotted with villas, and Romney made the discovery that the houses of the rue Rodin had little gardens running upwards to end in the stone wall built partly above and partly below the level of the upper road. There was a drop of ten feet into the gardens, and Mr. Ghool's house could be approached with comparative ease.

Romney scanned the back windows. Most of them were shuttered, and he saw that there was a door on the ground floor leading into the garden, but he was chary of loitering too openly about the place, and when he had seen what he had wished to see, he disappeared from the neighbourhood. The crux of the problem was how to watch Ghool out of the house without Ghool suspecting that he was being watched. It would not do for Peter to be seen hanging about the rue Rodin.

He appealed to Edouard le Brun, and le Brun produced one Jacquot, aged twelve, a youngster with laughing eyes and the face of an angel.

The Whistling Troubadour

"The little devil is as sharp as a croupier. Oh, yes, he is used to dodging round corners. He'll enjoy it."

So Jacquot was given five francs, advice, and instructions, and told to watch a particular house for an old gentleman with a reddish stain in his beard. "Le Siffleur" would be on a certain seat in a certain place, and Jacquot would report to him.

As it happened, Mr. Ghool's door did not open until sunset. He emerged; he wore a dark overcoat and a soft felt hat, but under the coat Jacquot observed the white shirt and black tie of the diner-out. Ghool had a "fish" waiting to bite at some hotel, and Jacquot reported intelligently to Romney.

"A table d'hôte evening, monsieur."

Romney hastened to the rue Rodin. His first summons was a formal one; he rang Mr. Ghool's bell and knocked at the door, but after waiting some five minutes for a response that never came, he set out to attack the house from the rear. It was growing dark as he slipped over the wall and dropped into the garden. There were no lights burning in the house, but he noticed that the shutters were not closed over one of the first-floor windows, and that the window itself was open. He tried the garden door and found it locked.

Standing close under the shadow of the wall he began a soft whistling of the familiar song. For a moment nothing happened, and then a shutter high up in the wall swung open, and he could distinguish the outline of a head.

"Pansy!"

"It is you. Oh, Peter—!"

"Come down—and open the door. He has gone out."

"I can't. He has locked me in."

Romney stood back and examined the wall. A water-pipe passed within a yard of the open window on the first floor, and he swarmed up it, swung himself on to the sill, and squeezed through the window.

The house was in darkness, but he found an electric switch on the stairs.

"Pansy?"

"I am here."

Her voice came from the room above, and he was up the stairs and outside the door of the locked room. Old Ghool had taken the key with him.

"Dear, don't be afraid. He has taken the key. I shall have to be rude to the door."

"But, Peter, when he comes back—!"

"You won't be here."

The door was a flimsy thing, and it gave to the second crash of his shoulder. He found her standing there in the middle of the room, her hands over her bosom, her dim face sad between fear and exultation.

"Oh, Peter!"

"Little thing—"

He put an arm round her and felt her wince.

"Dear, my shoulders!"

"Good God, he has been beating you!"

"Yes."

"The beast! He will never do it again. I am taking you away."

And suddenly she clung to him.

"Oh, I'm afraid. But what will happen? He will come back; he will be sure to find me."

"Ma chérie, you are going to belong to me, and not to him. We are going to belong to each other. Courage."

He led her out of the room and down the stairs, her head against his shoulder.

"Never mind about a hat. That won't matter. We are just a pair of lovers—out in the dusk. I am taking you to the house of a friend; she's a dear woman, and she'll be kind to you. Have you ever been to sea in a ship, Pansy?"

"No."

"Well, I am going to fix that up. Genoa or Marseilles; we'll just disappear and get married."

But in the vestibule she had a sudden spasm of terror, her two hands gripping his arm.

"But he will find me. He will kill me. You don't know him. He has such power."

Romney took her face between his hands.

"Little thing, I love you. And love is the strongest thing in the world."

X

So Pansy slept in the room of Desiree le Brun, a Pansy who could not believe that she was in a new world made up of new people, people who were kind to you for no reason at all. The two women had mothered her, and when she had shown them the bruises John Ghool had left on her back, they had grown angry.

"The old pig!"

"And such a pretty back, ma chérie! There is only one man who has any sort of right to beat a woman."

"And who is that?"

"Her lover."

(Continued on page 269)



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See th

By Warwick Deeping

"Do you think Peter will beat me?"

"Peter! Peter couldn't beat a mule. I think not, my dear."

Pansy slept, but ever and again she woke with a start of fear, and lay listening for the sound of footsteps on the stairs, for old Ghool was so real a devil to her that she could imagine him miraculously arriving in this strange house, and carrying her off to the old life. She heard Desiree's quiet breathing, and the sound was reassuring, like the rustle of leaves in some tranquil place far away from the haunts of men.

Then came the morning sunlight and laughter, and things borrowed from this most good-natured of French girls, and breakfast at the le Bruns' table, with coffee and fresh rolls, and Peter sitting next her, and Edouard looking at her kindly with his wise brown eyes. Was it true that she had a lover, and was free? She felt Peter's hand under the table.

"Everyone is so kind."

"Why, yes, it is not a bad sort of world, little thing. And you and I are going to see much more of it."

"To-day? I mean—"

"This morning I am going down to the harbour to try my smile on the sailors."

"You won't leave me long, Peter?"

"I shall leave you with madame. And if anybody should appear here when I am out, you leave him to madame."

When Peter went out Edouard and Desiree had gone to their work, Pansy helped madame in the kitchen, and then asked if she might go to her room.

"I shall feel safer there, madame."

"Safe! Why, the old pig is not going to break into my house."

"But if he comes! He has such power."

"Go up, *ma chérie*. I hope he will come, though I don't see how he is to guess you are here, but, anyway, I should like a few words with him."

Pansy went to Desiree's room, and found some comfort in locking the door, while madame posted herself in her little salon, with the street door bolted. She was darning stockings, and thinking how much she would like to say certain things to Mr. Ghool, when someone knocked at the door, and she went to open it.

Madame confessed afterwards to Peter Romney that she was surprised when she found the old man standing on her doorstep, quite chic and polite. As she described it to Romney: "The old beast purred like a cat. I thought he was

going to rub himself against my legs."

"Good morning, madame," says he; "I believe Monsieur Romney lodges here." He had found out that. So I asked him what business that was of his, and then — *ma foi* — he assumed as cool as you pleased that his daughter was here. "I wish to speak to her, madame." I confess I was angry and a little hasty. "Indeed, monsieur. One of those nice, fatherly conversations! Yes, we have seen the mark of your eloquence on her back." And then I slammed the door in his face."

Romney looked grave.

"Does she know?"

"Not a thing. She was upstairs."

"But he knows now that she is here."

I have not been able to arrange anything yet. I shall try again this afternoon."

Later in the day Romney had better luck, and he returned to the rue Albi about four.

"I have got to go down again. The old tub is run by two brothers, and the one I saw would not fix up anything without his partner."

He held Pansy's face between his hands.

"You want to go, dear?"

"Oh, yes."

"And you'll trust me? You can."

Romney had seen nothing of Mr. Ghool, nor had Ghool attempted a second interview with Madame le Brun, and as Romney went down to the harbour he met the boy Jacquot. It was a mere impulse that made him enlist the boy a second time in his service.

"Hollo! Jacquot. Anything doing?"

"No, monsieur."

"You might keep an eye on the rue Albi. If you should see that old gentleman hanging about I would like to know. I am going down to the harbour."

"Will you be long, monsieur?"

"Oh, half an hour; not much more."

Now at the bottom of the rue Albi a little white café spreads a white awning and green tables over the stones of the Place des Fleurs, and here, at one of the tables, and half hidden by a box tree in a wooden tub, an old man sat with half a bottle of red wine and a glass before him. He saw Romney go by, and was unseen by him. He was in the shadow. He sat very still, eyes half closed, slightly frowning, with the air of a man deep in thought, and yet the motionless figure and the still head suggested intense activity, an activity of mind, will force.

The Whistling Troubadour

Romney was away less than half an hour. He returned to the rue Albi as the sky began to redden above the house-tops. He saw nothing of Jacquot, and at the door of the house he met Madame Le Brun, who had been up the street visiting a neighbour.

Romney's smiling face spoke of success.

"They will take us. They sail early to-morrow for Leghorn."

"So you are happy!"

"I am. I must tell her."

They entered the house together, and Romney's soft whistling filled it. "Pansy," he called. "Pansy." But the house was silent; no door opened, and there was no fluttering of feet upon the stairs.

Romney and the woman looked at each other.

"Perhaps she is asleep. I was not any more than a quarter of an hour. The door could only be opened from the inside."

Romney ran up the stairs calling "Pansy—Pansy." He opened doors and looked into empty rooms, but the bird that he had rescued from the cage had flown.

He came hurrying down with a face of fear.

"She has gone!"

"Impossible!"

"But she has."

"I left her—here."

Romney was out of the door and hurrying down the rue Albi.

XI

At the bottom of the street he met Jacquot, an excited and breathless Jacquot.

"Monsieur—monsieur. I ran to find you. The old man has her—"

"Quick."

"I saw him standing by the café—there. And suddenly the girl came down the street to him. She looked queer, monsieur, so queer."

"How?"

"Just as though her eyes did not see."

"Which way did they go?"

"Down towards the harbour, monsieur. I saw them take one of the paths up to Monaco. They went slowly, very slowly. I ran to find you."

"Thanks, Jacquot. I must hurry."

He ran, and the boy, after running a few steps after him, paused and stood still. He watched Romney disappear,

and then he walked on slowly to the house of the Le Bruns.

And Romney, hurrying with the passion of a lover, realized what had happened, and that Ghool's boast had been no thing of air. It was amazing, horrible, but it was probable that this old man could dominate Pansy from a distance, and cast his will upon her like a magic net. He had come, and she had gone to him, blindly, like a creature walking in her sleep.

Romney reached one of the steep paths and series of steps leading up to the headland. His pursuit was a fierce impulse; it had no plan; it could not penetrate the possibilities of the next hour. Why had Ghool taken her up to Monaco—why not to the house in the rue Rodin? What was in the man's mind?

The path brought him to the road below the palace, and he saw all the purple of the sea fretted with the light of the sunset. The houses and trees were turning black. Ahead of him rose an archway, and beyond it the gardens, and just short of the archway, and leaning against the parapet of the cliff wall Romney saw a man waiting. The figure was familiar. It appeared to have posted itself to watch for the coming of an enemy.

Ghool!

Ghool was smoking a cigar. His face was turned towards "Le Siffleur de Provence," and as Romney came near to him he was aware of Mr. Ghool's smile. It was amused, sardonic, challenging, slightly triumphant.

"Good evening, Mr. Whistler."

There were few people about, and Romney's eyes looked ugly, but Ghool seemed to trust in some secret weapon of his own.

"I am glad you have come. I thought that you might come. We have made quite a business of having each other watched."

Romney had paused within two yards of him. He had a feeling that old Ghool was like the detonator connected to a charge of dynamite. If he were touched something might explode.

"What have you done with her?"

"Pansy! Oh, I will show you in a moment. She is quite safe—"

He paused, sniffing the aroma of the cigar.

"Provided—you do not do anything foolish. No, stay here, please. This is my show."

He looked across to Monte Carlo, and pointed with his cigar.

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By Warwick Deeping

"Fine effect—that! Look at the colour. The casino might be a casket carved out of ivory. Yes, to revert to personal matters, I wanted you here in order to prove to you that when we had our little discussion in the gardens I was not talking through my hat. I said that the girl belonged to me."

Romney's eyes gave him a fierce "Damn you," but he said nothing.

"No need to look cross, my dear sir. I propose showing you the value of authority. I think you will confess that I have you in cold storage, you and your hot emotions. A test case—what?"

"Very well. Get on with it."

"I will. But, by the way, before we walk on, may I warn you that it will be dangerous for you to try any violence."

"For me?"

"Oh, no. For the girl. There might be an accident. I am quite sure that neither of us wants an accident."

He nodded, gave Romney a glance of mockery, and walked on through the gateway. Some distance up the road he diverged into a pathway among the shrubs and trees, and through the black tangle of the foliage the sky showed its fading gold. The path led down to a seat placed in a sort of little bastion on the edge of a cliff. A low wall about two feet high protected the seat from the cliff edge, but there was a sheer drop beyond it.

On the wall a girl was standing, poised like a statue, her face turned towards the sea.

XII

GHOOL, standing there in the space behind the seat, pointed his cigar at Pansy like a devil's showman.

"There you are. I put her there, and willed her to remain there. Yes, she is quite safe, so long as you do not interfere. Utterly under my control, you see. And supposing, for the sake of argument, that I suggested that she should throw herself over—"

His red eyes grew fierce.

"Yes, she would do it. And if I believed that you could take her away from me I would will her to do it."

Romney stood very still. He felt like a man bound with invisible cords, all his muscles taut, his hands lusting to take the old man by the throat and choke his arrogance. His impulse was to pitch Mr. Ghool into the sea. But this was no physical struggle, but a grapple between two spirits—two personalities, two

opposing streams of the life force. A will that was evil had put the girl there; it kept her there, and even threatened to push her over the edge into the unknown.

And Romney, with his eyes on Pansy's motionless figure, felt—as men have felt of old—that the devil can be overthrown only by some spirit that is stronger than the spirit of evil.

His inspiration came to him. He remembered the simple boast he had made to her in the gardens, that love is the strongest thing on earth, and it seemed to him that life was challenging him to make good that boast. Most strangely the anger went out of him! his face softened; he smiled.

He turned to John Ghool.

"I understand. She cannot belong to both of us, and one of us must have the stronger right to her. You have put her there, and you say that you can keep her there."

The old man nodded.

"Well, supposing I challenge that right? Let us test our rights, one against the other. That's fair?"

"Yes, that's fair. Your will against mine. If she stays on that wall she belongs to me."

"And if—by willing and speaking—I can bring her down to me—"

"Yes, she will be yours."

They regarded each other for a moment with intent hostility, like two armed enemies, whose weapons were invisible. Ghool's red eyes were arrogant; his rusty beard seemed to bristle.

Romney smiled at him, and his face was transfigured. It was the face of the world's youth, a thing of light and of passionate gladness, while the old man's face was a thing of evil shadows.

Romney began to whistle. He whistled like a bird to its mate, softly, with a poignant, fluting tenderness, his eyes fixed upon the figure of the girl. And it seemed to him that something stirred in her; there was a slight movement, like the stirring of a tree when the wind blows. She swayed.

He spoke to her.

"Pansy, I love you. Pansy, I want you. Come to me."

And then, that which his love had willed happened. Slowly she turned about, the last vivid touch of the sunset upon her face. She stretched out her hands. There was a harsh cry from old Ghool, like the angry cry of a bird of prey. She swayed. She came down from the wall into the arms of her lover.

WARWICK DEEPING.

Footprints in the Snow

By Warwick Deeping

25

"So, into her forlorn and grieving soul stole the thought of sacrifice. At first it was no more than a vague impulse, a reaching out of her woman's nature towards some soothing and expressive act. The emotion pent up in her fluttered like a wild bird in a cage..."



STEPHEN HARDCASTLE came in from the snow with a face of thunder.



He stood on the doorstep kicking the snow from his boots, one big hand gripping the iron door handle. Then he swung the door to, tossed his hat on to the sofa under the window, and slouched towards the fire.

No wind breathed in the great chimney, and on the andirons in the open hearth a log smoked sulkily above a pile of charred sticks and ash. Stephen's hands were all blue about the knuckles. He bent down to warm them, but the smouldering log had but little heat to give him.

He straightened, turned about, and, rubbing his hands together, stared out of the farmhouse window. He saw the roof of the cow-house white with snow, the heave of the brilliant hills, the black woods in the valleys, the thin blue of the sky. The sun had risen half an hour ago, and was sending slanting splinters of light through the little square panes of the casement.

"Sun or cloud—it's all the same."

He turned again towards the fire, and of a sudden the bitter rage that was in him vented itself upon the smouldering log. He lifted up one of his feet and jabbed savagely at the wood with his heavy boot.

"Burn—curse you."

The log sent up a scattering of sparks, and, toppling off the andirons, rolled towards the rug

upon which Stephen was standing. Its impishness exasperated him. He swung a foot and kicked it into a corner of the open fireplace.

"Cussed! Everything has turned cussed in this damned house."

For a moment he was unaware of a woman standing in the doorway with the breakfast tray in her hands. Her eyes looked across at him a little fearfully and with that quality of sadness that feels itself helplessly entangled in a smother of unhappy circumstances. Ruth and Stephen Hardcastle had been married two years, and for the last year Ruth had seen a shadow spreading across the surface of life.

She came in and set the tray on the table. She looked at her man almost furtively, with a shrinking tenderness. He stood with his back to her, sulkily savage, his big shoulders slouched, one foot still dabbing at the fire.

"Cold, Steve? I'm afraid that log was damp."

He grunted.

"There's plenty of dry wood in the lodge."

"I'm sorry."

She began to lay the table, while he stood there glooming, unthinkingly breaking the too eager heart of her, for Ruth loved her man, and she would have loved him in his sulks and his silences if he would have let her. But Stephen had grown dour and detached. He was worried, savagely worried, and, like a horse, he was either restive or stubborn. There were times when he shrugged Ruth off, and went away into lonely places by himself.

There was silence between them.

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Ruth completed the laying of the table, and, returning to the kitchen, she filled the teapot and took the dish of bacon from the oven. She was rather fragile for a farmer's wife, with a wide pale face and dark eyes, and for the last year she had been growing thin.

"Ready, Steve."

She sat down. She poured out his tea, making a deliberate effort to be cheerful. She was always trying to smile him out of his moods of pre-occupied and half-resentful seriousness, but of late her smile had been the smile of a woman in pain.

Steve's face of thunder hung between her and that white world, and she saw the sweep of his brown shoulders against the snow-covered roof of the cow-house. His blue eyes stared at his plate. He ate savagely, hurriedly, his head bent, his great strong hands making the knife and fork look like a child's toy, and he said never a word to her. His silence was like a hand pressing upon her throat. She felt that she must thrust it aside or be smothered.

"Steve, it's Christmas to-morrow."

"Christmas!"

He echoed the word, looking across at her with gloomy eyes.

"Will you be driving into Oak-bridge this afternoon?"

"Maybe—I shall."

"I have some shopping to do. Do you remember the shopping we did last Christmas?"

He remembered it, but the sweetness of it had turned sour within him.

"No need for shopping. What's Christmas to us?"

"Why—just Christmas, Steve."

Her voice trembled a little and appealed, and because he was blindly hurt by it he was blindly brutal.

"What's Christmas to us! Will it change our bad luck?"

She went white. She picked up the teapot and began to refill her cup, spilling some of the tea into the saucer.

"Oh, not again, Steve, not more of it!"

"Jenny's dead," he said gruffly.

"Dead!"

"Yes, dead as a door-nail. And that's all the good the vet. was to us. Said she would be all right in a week."

He reached out a great hand and seized the loaf.

"With calf, too. I paid seventy pounds for that beast three years ago. And I had luck with her. But now——! It's been the same with everything."

She shrank and quivered. She tried to face the implication that lay behind his words, to meet it with a love that yearned to bear with his difficulties and his bitternesses. He was overworked and he was over-worried. Things had gone wrong, so wrong that the little tragedies of the farm might almost have been brought about by some malevolent spirit. And deep down in his country soul Steve was superstitious. His people had been religious, and he believed in the Devil.

"It can't go on for ever."

Her voice had a note of anguish.

He looked at her steadily for a moment.

"It's gone on for two years, nearly long enough to break us."

And with those blindly brutal words he got up, pushing his chair back roughly, while his hand felt in his pocket for his pipe. Ruth sat dumb. Those words of his and the savage significance of them had gone straight to her heart. Life had gone well with Stephen until he had married her; his tongue had uttered what his gloomy and reproachful silences had implied.

She waited, conscious of her wound. Did he realize what he had said—what he had done to her? She saw him standing there by the window, cramming tobacco into the bowl of his pipe. A ray of sunlight fell upon his brown head and the bowed strength of his shoulders.

She longed to cry out to him:

"Steve, Steve, say you did not mean that!"

But she remained mute. She saw him light his pipe, pick up his hat and walk to the door. He did not look at her. He opened the door, went out, closed it, and she heard his footsteps muffled by the snow.

For a while Ruth remained at the table, picking with finger and thumb at a loose thread in the cloth. She knew that before he had married her Stephen had loved Forge Farm more than anything else in the world, for he had taken it barren and derelict and beautiful, and he had fought and striven with it until it had become fruitful and clean. He had found the fences rotting, the gates broken, the "arable" weedy and poor, the pastures returning to bracken. He had fought with Nature, and had seemed to vanquish her, and he had gone about with the smile of the conqueror upon his face. Ruth remembered the look in his eyes when he had brought her to Forge Farm.

"Here we are, my girl. It's a great little farm, and it's ours."

"It's beautiful, Steve," she had said, with her eyes on the green woods, and the deep, rolling meadows.

"It's more than beautiful; it's paying."

Then, after the marriage, things had begun to go wrong, and at first Stephen had met them with an air of puzzled calmness. "O, it would be all right next month or next year. One had to take the rough with the smooth." But Nature was playing her game with this big, brown, boastful man, for Nature is never so dangerous as when a man thinks that he has taken her measure. Stephen Hardcastle had wrestled with her and thrown her, but she was ready with her revenge. She had given him two bad seasons; she had rained on his hay, till some of it had not been worth carrying; she had withheld rain from his root crops, and yet she had contrived storms that had laid his corn. She

had given him sickness with his beasts. One of his cart-horses had got unaccountably drowned in the Forge Pool. And Stephen had fought her — savagely, fiercely, gloomily. He was losing money. He was overworking himself; he had discharged his man and was trying to run the farm with the help of a boy.

Moreover, his pride had suffered. He had been apt to scoff at other men's failures. He—Stephen Hardcastle—was not the sort of man who failed.

Ruth sat and stared at the breakfast table. She was aware of something tragic in this lonely house set in its snow-whitened valley. She, too, had fought to help her man; she had given up her girl and done all the work of the house; she milked the cows, and helped Steve with the feeding. And he had not seemed to realize it all, or to notice how tired she was at nights, so tired sometimes that she could not get to sleep. Perhaps, that was what hurt her most, his blindness, his utter absorption in the material struggle.

"I brought him love," she thought, "and now—he has come to think that I brought him bad luck. Doesn't love count? O, Steve, I have tried so hard!"

She rose and began to go dully about the day's work, feeling that her heart was smothering, and that it was so weary and so discouraged that it longed to cease to beat.

"If only he hadn't stopped loving me! If he didn't look so black! Yes, I could have gone on for ever and ever."

She cleared away the breakfast things, and as she was leaving the room her glance fell upon the dead fire. He had grumbled at her because the fire had failed, and yet it had never occurred to him that she might have a bitter grievance against the love that was failing.

She burst into sudden tears.

"Oh, I'm a failure!"

And the silent house had for her no whisper of comfort. Never had

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it seemed to her so silent as on this windless winter day with the world muffled up in its blanket of snow. There was something haunting and uncanny in its silence, as though this old place had watched other tragedies, and was now expectantly watching hers. There was no live thing in the house save the cat asleep in front of the kitchen fire; and an overwhelming sense of loneliness descended upon her. She wanted someone—warm hands, a kind voice; she wanted Stephen her man, and Stephen had become like a stranger, gloomily busy out there in the snow.

She stood listening, and there was not a sound save the drip-drip of the snow thawing in the sunshine and falling from the eaves.

"What a Christmas!" she thought, "just like one of those dear old cards! And how different, how different from two years ago!"

She felt that she must rouse herself, do something, make an effort to escape from this atmosphere of tragic helplessness, and she went up to their bedroom and began to strip the bed. It was still warm, and its warmth hurt her. She sank down and buried her face for a moment in her man's pillow. Never had she wanted him as she wanted him now.

Again she roused herself, and going to the window, looked out upon that familiar landscape with its gleaming hills and sombre woods. Below lay the little garden, and beyond it the cow-yard sunk below a stone-retaining wall. On the right the big black barn and the wagon shed stood shoulder to shoulder under a mighty elm. Something moved there. She heard the jarring of a gate, and Stephen appeared, walking away from her across the smooth white surface of the home paddock. His figure looked very dark against the snow; the footprints he left behind him were little pockets of shadow. He walked heavily, stooping slightly, going slowly and surely away from her just as he seemed to be walking

out of her life. She saw him disappear behind the black shagginess of a hedge, and sighing, she went back to her work.

At dinner time Ruth had his meal ready and a good fire blazing on the hearth. She watched Stephen come up from the yard, hoping to discover some lifting of the thunder-cloud upon his face, but he looked more gloomy than ever.

They sat down in silence at the table, and Ruth, finding the silence intolerable, made an effort to break it, and it seemed to her that her voice sounded thin and small in the great oak-beamed room.

"Are you going to Oakbridge, Steve?"

He nodded, and kept his eyes on his plate.

"Guess I'll walk over. It would be a heavy journey for a horse."

She realized that she was to be left alone, and that there was to be no Christmas shopping.

"It's a long walk for you, Steve."

"That won't worry me. Anything you want in Oakbridge?"

She sat very white and still.

"No, nothing, Steve, thank you."

But when the moment of his going came her calmness broke for an instant. She had helped him on with his overcoat, and he was lighting his pipe by the open door, when the soul of his wife surprised him.

"Kiss me, Steve."

He removed his pipe, and bent down a little awkwardly, and her arms went round his neck. Her lips clung to his for a moment with a kind of tender fierceness that surprised him.

"Good-bye, Steve. Take care of yourself."

"Sure," he said.

And then he closed the door, and walked away to the garden gate without looking back. Ruth ran to the side window, and saw him disappear into the mouth of the rutty lane where the tall hedges made a thin gloom.

"He's gone," she thought, "he's gone. And he did not want me to

go with him. He does not want me any more. Everything's dead."

She did not see what happened when Stephen reached the end of the sunken lane, and stood on the open hillside above the farm. He paused. He turned and stared as if some sudden, revealing emotion had touched him. He took his pipe from his mouth, and passed the back of his hand across his lips, for something of her kiss still lingered there.

"She kissed me strange," he thought; "I ought not to have left her there. But it's done now. Dang it, I'll buy her a present."

He turned and walked on over the virgin snow, stooping slightly as under some accumulating weight of thought and of emotion. The gloom on his face became gentler, changing to a sadness that was ceasing to be blind. It may have been that kiss of hers had left a wound and had instilled into it a sweet and tragic poison, the essence of a woman's love that had felt death in the air, and had clung to life for one last passionate moment.

And Stephen Hardcastle was troubled, and with every step he took the snow seemed heavier to his feet. Something was pulling at him, urging him to go back, and for a while doggedly he resisted it.

"No; I'll buy her a present. I haven't been all I might have been. And it's Christmas Eve."

The decisive thought came to Ruth while she was putting back the washed plates into the rack, and so potent was the thought, and so mingled with a deep current of emotion that it carried her with it towards a fatal purpose. If love was dead, what was the use of living? Moreover, she had grown strangely superstitious during the last twelve months, or rather—she had grown conscious of all those mysterious forces which the old people had felt and suffered from, and had been unable to explain. She believed in ghosts, and she believed in spirits. How could one

help believing in such things when one lived in this rambling old house in a wild valley where the wind blew and the plover complained? Ruth felt things; she had felt them when she was a child, presences, inexplicable nearnesses, the sense of a peopled solitude. She had come to believe that all that had happened to Stephen had not happened by chance.

"His luck was good till I came here. I love him, and he has ceased to love me, and yet I have tried so hard. Something is against me. It's as though something wants revenge upon him and me, and will persecute him until it is satisfied. I am unhappy, and I shall never be happy again, but I want him to be happy. He loves the farm better than he loves me."

So, into her forlorn and grieving soul stole the thought of sacrifice. At first it was no more than a vague impulse, a reaching out of her woman's nature towards some soothing and expressive act. The emotion pent up in her fluttered like a wild bird in a cage. If she gave herself, might not the malevolent thing that was persecuting them be satisfied? For with women the impulse towards self-sacrifice may be instinctive, a thrust from the dominant and ever-living past, a flaming up of the quenchless fire of her heritage.

She stood, holding one of the white plates against her cheek, and its coolness was soothing, like the coolness of water or the first stealing on of sleep.

She went upstairs to their room, and, looking about her like a woman who takes her leave of many dear things, she knelt down by the bed. Her praying was a sacred flow of inarticulate yearning. She forgave, and she asked to be forgiven.

The black gate of the yard clanged behind her, a familiar sound making her think of summer evenings and the coming in of soft-eyed cows. "Coop-coop." And then, the milk frothing in the pail, and the

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contented chewing of the placid beasts in the cool gloom of the cow-house.

She put a hand to her throat and clung to the gate for a moment. She saw the track of Stephen's footsteps like the links of a chain across the snow, and she set out to follow them, mingling her track with his until she came to the gate of the Forge Pool meadow. Here Stephen's footprints ceased, or, rather, they diverged along the hedge, while Ruth's went on over the smooth whiteness down and down towards the Forge Pool. She saw it below her, opaque and grey, covered with an ice film, its edge shaggy with bushes, rushes, and tufts of withered sedge. The black woods descended to embrace the eastern half of it, and the westering sun threw pale gleams upon the ice.

Stephen Hardcastle came ploughing down the lane. A mile beyond Malt's Mill something had turned him back, a sense of fear, an impulse, a quaking and panic of the heart.

He opened the door and called.

"Ruth, girl—where are you?"

No one answered him, and the silence of the house quickened his reawakened love. He was afraid, and in those moments of fear when he was hunting for her everywhere, he suddenly saw and understood all their life together in this silent house. It was as though the tragic revelation of it had been waiting for him, and now that it revealed itself he was filled with shame and wild tenderness and horror.

"Ruth! Ruth!"

His own echoing voice reproached him. He began to tremble as he went from room to room, knowing all the while that she was not there, and then he tried to laugh it off. Of course! She had felt lonely and had gone out to see some friend. He had only to follow her footsteps in the snow to discover what had become of her and where she had gone. He acted upon the inspira-

tion, and sure enough there were her footprints leading down the path and across the farmyard to the field gate.

Stephen Hardcastle stood there for a moment with his hands on the gate, and his face seem to reflect the whiteness of the snow. He saw her footprints making a chain with his across the meadow to the gate in the Forge Pool field. That path led nowhere. Why had she gone that way? What did it mean?

His fear gave him an answer, and he was over the gate and running, while trying to laugh at the fear that ran at his side. He reached the second gate, vaulted over it, and then suddenly stood still. His wife's footprints led down towards the Forge Pool, and his fear—shivering like a dog beside him—looked up meaningfully into his eyes.

Slowly he began to follow her footsteps towards the pool. All the strength had gone out of him; he trembled; he was all eyes, eyes that searched the distant bushes about the water's edge. Those footprints led him on. He heard a voice in him saying: "They go down, but none come back."

Stephen Hardcastle was half-way across the meadow when he saw someone moving about the margin of the pool. A figure appeared from behind one of the bushes, and, pausing on the very edge of the bank, seemed to gaze fixedly at the grey film of ice covering the water. It was Ruth.

His heart gave a great leap in him.

"Ruth——!"

But at that very moment that his voice sent out its cry of joy and of relief he saw the figure of his wife fall with arms outspread towards the water.

Hardcastle was conscious of nothing till he reached the pool and found himself splashing amid the crackle of the broken ice. The water was deep just here, and he thrashed about in it, turning this way and that, his wet hair hanging over his

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eyes. And then he touched something, something that floated like a weed. He plunged, caught an object that was soft, and dear, and human, struggled to the surface with it, and fought his way towards the bank.

Never had he felt so strong and yet so weak. He ran, holding her in his arms, while she made a little moaning, her head lying against his shoulder. His heart beat like a great bell; the snow smoked under his feet. He opened the gates and let them crash behind him, conscious of nothing but that wet white face and of a little body that still lived and breathed.

He carried her into the room, and, laying her on the sofa, lifted her, sofa and all, and set them before the fire. He fetched dry wood and made a blaze, rushed upstairs and dragged blankets off the bed, and, stripping off her wet clothes, he wrapped her in the blankets. She was cold, so cold, and her coldness terrified him. He pushed the sofa closer to the fire, and, bending over it, chafed her hands and feet. He

would have taken her in his arms and given her the warmth of his body, but for his own wet and sodden clothes.

"Oh, God," he prayed, "forgive me. Make her live."

And then a little warmth came back, a faint flush to her cheeks and colour to her lips. She opened her eyes, looked vaguely up at him and smiled.

"Steve."

He put down his great wet head, kissed her, and broke down.

"Oh, my little girl, I—I want you. What have I done?"

Her vague eyes seemed to fill with light.

"You want me, Steve! Oh, my man, I thought you had—had given up wanting me."

"Ruth—"

"I—I thought that I had brought you nothing but bad luck. And you—love—the farm."

He caught her face between his two big hands.

"The devil can fly away with the farm. The farm was making me blind."

WARWICK DEEPING.

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"Jellaby"

Storyteller
FEBRUARY

By Warwick Deeping

1923

28

"That he is a vulgar beast, that he is to be ostracized, driven out, because he made money by selling a substitute for honest butter! Suppose the man had a child. . . . How would he feel if his neighbours hurt her, humiliated her—?"

"Stop!" she said suddenly. "You seem to think—"



HE man had committed a great crime.

All the Vale of Bracknell was full of it—the crime and its perpetrator. It was gossiped about in drawing-rooms, across bridge- and billiard-tables, and at the last meeting of the Bracknell hounds.

"Of course — one can't blame Burgoyne. He had to do it, sell

and get out."

"But it's a shame, a disgrace."

"Nonsense, my dear chap, it's only a sign of the times."

"But Shelleys, a place like that. What's the chap's name? Jelly-bag or something?"

"Jellaby."

"Good lord!"

Even Lady Margaret Paradell seemed to feel the keen wind as she sat her horse on the slope east of Bracknell Big Wood. Her dark and impartial face looked slightly pinched, her straight brows thoughtful, the eyes under them hard as black glass. She was between Sir Hakluyt Honeyman and Gerald Garstang, two very dull but admirable gentlemen, and though they talked to each other and discussed this thing named Jellaby, it was with an air of waiting upon the woman, the one woman who mattered in Bracknell Vale. For there are women—a very few—who exact homage without asking for it, who are born with the divine right upon their foreheads and on their tongues, and who seem created by ironical Nature to contradict

the dogma of equality. Nor was Margaret Paradell's superiority a thing of the surface, a mere polishing of an aristocratic shell. She was what she looked, a little harder, a little handsomer; more mysterious and more subtle than her neighbours.

"Please, tell me, the first Burgoyne made his money in the Flanders wars?"

The men looked at her.

"Yes, but hang it, he was a soldier. He carried a sword, not a cheese scoop."

"To be exact, Sir Hakluyt—!"

"Well, call it a margarine tub. I might suggest that he removes the Burgoyne arms from the gates of Shelleys and puts up butter tubs with a couple of blue labels."

"Jellaby, his marg!"

They laughed.

"But it's a deuce of a shame. I suppose he will make a greasy mess of that fine old place."

Lady Margaret looked fixedly at the great oaks of Bracknell Wood.

"Labels," she said; "we always play at pasting on labels. Even on margarine tubs! Hallo! they've found."

That was the crime, the buying of Shelleys, the home of the Burgoynes and the Varleys, by a man named Jellaby who had made his money in margarine. And Shelleys of all places, that romance in old red brick hidden away in its green valley, a most gentle and stately home, secure, aloof, part of the old spirit of things! Bracknell Vale held a very clannish community. It was still penetrated by the mediæval feeling that it was vulgar and dishonourable for a man to make too much money.

"Jellaby"

None of these people had seen the creature Jellaby, they did not intend to see him, for on two previous occasions Bracknell Vale had dealt silently and successfully with somewhat similar invasions. The people had stayed one year, two years, to be taught by being ignored that Bracknell Vale did not want them, and would continue not to want them. But this Jellaby man was different; he had got hold of Shelleys, and all Bracknell had a peculiar affection for Shelleys. They visualized the invader as something rotund, swollen, and shiny, a greasy thing, noisy, cheerful, rolling about on fat legs, leaving a track of slime like a snail. No doubt Bracknell Vale was prejudiced. A woman like Margaret Paradell had the right to be prejudiced. So had the Grantchesters, the Garstangs, and the Polperros. They might not be clever or modern people, but they were mellow.

As Mrs. Polperro put it:

"I have a great respect for my grocer—so long as the counter remains between us."

And yet, perhaps, these pleasant people did not do justice to the very obvious truth that the man who has escaped from behind the counter must be educated somehow. Every family begins with an ancestor, and it is reasonable to suppose that social schools should be established for the education and the polishing of ancestors. Breed does matter; it matters supremely. The mutation arrives and should be recognized. Two hundred years ago the original Hakluyt Honeyman was a tanner of hides, filling a certain country town with unpleasant odours and success.

But Jellaby! They would have none of him. He might erect a pyramid of margarine tubs a mile high in Shelleys Park and let off maroons from the top of it, and no one would as much as ask what had happened.

May came to the valley, and about

that time a man arrived and put up at The Seven Stars at Burghurst. The man's name was Cosgrave. He looked about five-and-forty; there was nothing very conspicuous about him, save that he wore a little tuft of grey-black hair on his chin and that his eyes had a peculiar intelligence. His habits were of the simplest. He showed a preference for oldish clothes, especially comfortable tweeds, roomy knickers, self-coloured stockings. He had slim, well-shaped legs, and there is far more character in legs than people imagine. Bulging calves and bulging heads are apt to be associated.

He carried about with him the appurtenances of an artist. He was seen setting up his little easel in Burghurst churchyard, his old jacket matching the lichen on the stones. And Burghurst was satisfied. It had seen the artist type before, it recognized it, and the man Cosgrave was labelled. Nobody worried about him any more. He was just the "picture-painting chap, him as is staying at T' Seven Stars."

But sometimes he fished. There were a few trout in the Brack, and Cosgrave rented a small stretch of the river. Mr. Smale, of The Seven Stars, who was also a fisherman, arranged it for him, and this common interest brought the two men together. Smale had lived in Burghurst thirty years; he knew everyone in the Vale, and everybody's business. He was a Tory of Tories, and he looked it, like a compact and stocky old apple tree, or an old red coaching-house—clean and solid.

He had a quick eye, too, for a gentleman, none quicker. The size of a car or the cut of a coat did not impose upon him, and from the first he recognized the gentleman in Cosgrave. He would always address him as "sir," and Mr. Smale never wasted a "sir" on a man who was obviously a "Mr."

He had his admirations too, a

By Warwick Deeping

countryman's love for the Bracknell oaks on a sunny autumn morning, the view from the uplands of Oak Royal, the Brack at Abbot's Mill, the calm red stateliness of Shelleys seen from the park.

"You ought to make a picture of that, sir," he said to Cosgrave, and added: "It's a pity it has gone to the Jews."

Cosgrave had dined, and the two men were alone in the smoking-room of The Seven Stars, a little room all strutted and beamed like a cabin in an old ship.

"Why do you say that, Mr. Smale?"

Cosgrave paused in the lighting of his pipe. His eyelids had given a sort of sensitive flicker. Smale, standing by the door—he had come in to ask Cosgrave about his day's sport—explained the tragedy of Shelleys and its descent into the pocket of a plutocrat.

"Man named Jellaby; made his money in margarine."

"But surely, isn't it possible—? Well, I suppose that would be so."

The man in the arm-chair lit his pipe, sitting forward with his elbows on his knees. Mr. Smale noticed that his forehead was puckered slightly.

"You can understand that, sir. We have always bred our own cattle in the Vale."

"But new blood—sometimes?"

"That's true. It may be the Burgoynes had bred thin, but the Vale has its own notions. We do value a gentleman down here, sir, and we do hold that only a gentleman should own a house that was built by gentlemen. I'm no Socialist; I've seen too much of many sorts of men."

"So—Jellaby is no gentleman. Has anyone seen him?"

He smiled up at Mr. Smale, but there was the faintest glimmer of a sensitive fierceness in his smile.

"No, I think not, sir. He's expected, that's all."

"And the Vale won't welcome him?"

"That's pretty well a certainty. Raw, he'll be that I expect. He'll pull the old place about and spoil it. You have got to grow into an old place, Mr. Cosgrave, to know how to treat it properly. Well, as I was saying, you ought to paint Shelleys, sir, and before the chap has time to spoil it."

"Perhaps I shall," said the man in the chair.

Yet, less than a week later, it began to be known in the Vale that "Lord Margarine"—as Mrs. Polperro had nicknamed the Jellaby—was less of a savage than might have been expected. The news originated with Mr. Josiah Tutt, of Tutt and Tutt, builders, of Burghurst. Messrs. Tutt, who carried on an old-fashioned and solid business in the Vale, had been communicated with by a well-known firm of London architects who had been instructed to make a report on Shelleys. It appeared that Mr. Jellaby wished all the necessary repairs to be carried out by some old-established local firm who still retained some of the English oak traditions. But the peculiar part of the arrangement was that nothing was to be done without the advice and approval of a Mr. James Cosgrave, an artist, who was staying at Burghurst. Mr. Tutt's face seemed to grow a shade rounder and shinier. Trade was rather slack, and thanks to years of Burgoyne poverty the dilapidations at Shelleys were serious. Besides, when a millionaire started operations who could tell where they would end?

Mr. Tutt had some men at work up at Oak Royal repairing the roof of that rather unsatisfactory house, and in hurrying the completion of this particular job he was led to explain the reason of it to Lady Margaret Paradell. They stood by the great sequoia on the circle of grass in front of the grey, stuccoed place, Mr. Josiah Tutt mildly steaming and heavily polite. He simmered. The lady's impartial graciousness was stimulating.

"Jellaby"

"Not a brick to be touched, your ladyship, without Mr. Cosgrave's permission; those are my orders. For instance, there is the old lantern over the hall; when my foreman got up on the roof he could push a finger through the frame; but—no, the lantern was to be left alone until this Mr. Cosgrave had drawn a picture of it and had it measured, so that it could be copied exact. And we are not to use any clean white paint; we've got to tint it, and we have got to darken our mortar when we point up some of the old walls."

"I am glad Mr. Jellaby is employing an artist," said the lady. "By the way, Mr. Tutt, have you seen Mr. Jellaby?"

"No, I haven't," said the builder, "only his architect chap who comes down from London and this Mr. Cosgrave."

"That is rather surprising."

"It is that, your ladyship, but I have seen his money."

Mr. Tutt's sickle-shaped mouth curved humorously. It was his opinion that the man's money was more important than the man.

Lady Margaret Paradell left Mr. Josiah Tutt standing with his little white beard cocked at the long and melancholy façade of Oak Royal and made her way down across the park. She was bound for Burghurst, but some impulse made her pause and turn about by a clump of Scotch firs, and she stood there, looking back at Oak Royal. Yes, the house was ugly, abominably ugly, bad Georgian, when Georgian could be so good. It was flat and melancholy and dull, utterly without mystery, crude in its outlines. Lady Margaret had never loved Oak Royal. She had tried very hard to love it, but somehow, life itself had failed to permeate the house and fill it with its vital aroma. As wife and widow her memories were not what they might have been. No children, no continuity, a disappointing husband killed in the war. She was lonely, and no one suspected it, though they did expect her to marry again.

"No, thank you," was her inward answer to that. "I think I prefer to be lonely."

She walked on. Her thoughts had gone to Shelleys, and they were thoughts which had a distant and tantalizing glamour, the plaintive joy of birds singing at dawn. Yes, she loved Shelleys. And why? She knew; no one else knew; the other person who had known had died ten years ago. A failure! What was failure?

She reached the park gates and took the upper road over the common, and here, close to an old thorn tree, she came upon a man sitting on a stool with his easel set up close to the road. He was painting Bracknell Vale, as seen from the high ground, and as Lady Margaret passed by she looked at the picture. It was a respectable piece of work; he had managed to get the atmosphere, the sense of depth, the haze and the multiplicity of the trees in the deep woodland descent to the meadows of the Brack.

She passed on. Some impulse made her turn back.

"Excuse me, but are you Mr. Cosgrave?"

The man stood up, palette in one hand, brush in the other. She accepted him at once as a gentleman; she knew a gentleman when she saw him. But his rather deep blue eyes puzzled her; they suggested polite, sensitive defiance.

"Yes, my name is Cosgrave."

"Please excuse me, but is it true that you are supervising the work at Shelleys?"

"I am."

His abruptness was not conciliatory, but she ignored it.

"I'm glad," she said.

His blue eyes and his little badger's brush of a beard were vaguely fierce.

"Why?"

He seemed to straighten. She looked at him more attentively.

"I have an affection for Shelleys."

"Indeed," he said.

His tone challenged her.

"Yes. You see, to be quite frank, I was rather horrified by the idea that a man like——"

"Jellaby?" he interposed sharply. She nodded.

"Yes, Mr. Jellaby."

"A manufacturer of margarine. But may I ask, is Mr. Jellaby inevitably damned, need he be——?"

"Of course not," she admitted. And then added: "You know him?"

"I knew him—very well."

He turned again to his picture, and she had a feeling that she had been badly worsted, but for some reason she did not resent it. The man interested her; she liked his air of sensitive defiance.

"You reassure me, Mr. Cosgrave," and she smiled at herself and not at him. "Please don't convict me of certain crudities. By the way, if you care to go into my park you will get an even better view of the Vale."

He thanked her, quite simply and without embarrassment. She noticed that his eyes looked at her for a moment as he might have looked at Shelleys, attentively, with a quiet gleam of unconscious pleasure.

"Thank you."

She walked on.

But he took advantage of her invitation, and his air of defiance did not prevent him from setting up his easel under the Scotch firs in Oak Royal Park. Lady Margaret Paradell saw him there next day. The man had interested her. She was very knowledgeable in the matter of English water-colours, and she was familiar with the names of most of the men of the modern school. "Cosgrave, Cosgrave?" The name was strange to her, and she concluded that he was but little known as a professional, or that he was just a capable amateur. Anyhow, he had invaded her park, nor did she guess that he had planted that easel of his deliberately as a soldier might have planted a battery of guns. He attacked. It was she who had provoked the attack.

He was there for three hours in full view of her windows, and during the afternoon she wandered out and spoke to him. He stood up directly she approached and remained behind his easel like a soldier accepting a parley.

"You get the effect of distance better here, don't you think?"

He agreed with her, and then—quite casually—she asked him in to tea.

"I am expecting one or two people. You won't mind?"

She fancied that he regarded her with a mixture of hostility and interest.

"Thank you. I'll come."

It did not occur to Margaret Paradell to wonder whether Cosgrave felt at ease in the vast drawing-room of Oak Royal. He was at ease. Sir Hakluyt Honeyman's passion was Old English glass; the subject had cropped up, and there were Mr. Cosgrave and the baronet by one of the long windows, comparing notes and loving each other.

"Come over and see my collection. What about to-morrow?"

"I shall be very glad to come," said Cosgrave. "I shall be fishing in the afternoon above Abbey Mill."

"Look here, come to lunch. I'll send the car down for you."

"It's very good of you."

"Oh, not a bit."

He fell next to Mrs. Polperro, and what Mrs. Polperro could not extract from a man was beneath consideration. She discovered Mr. Cosgrave to be interestingly reticent until she touched upon what should have promised to be a dead subject, Limoges enamel. That was her passion—that and roses. And Cosgrave knew a good deal about Limoges enamel, and something about roses. She accepted him with enthusiasm.

After tea he excused himself; he said that he wanted to make a study of the evening light shining slantwise across the valley of the Brack.

"Quite a dear," said Mrs. Polperro.

"Jellaby"

Sir Hakluyt agreed with her.

"Tells me he used to shoot a good deal, but has lost his taste for it since the war. My case—exactly."

They agreed that he was the very man to have the restoring of Shelleys. In fact, the Vale might be grateful to him for preserving the place from the possible vulgarities of the Jellaby.

Margaret Paradell smiled. When her people had gone she stood at one of the long windows and saw Cosgrave and his easel still planted by the group of Scotch firs. The evening sunlight shone upon the man; he seemed part of the landscape.

She did not see him again for three days, but on the morning of the fourth day she received a note; it was delivered by a boy on a bicycle.

"DEAR LADY PARADELL,—It has occurred to me that it might interest you to go over Shelleys and see what we are doing there. If so I shall be very glad to arrange it for you, and also to benefit by the advice of one who knows the Vale and its traditions so well.—Believe me, yours truly,

"JAMES COSGRAVE."

She smiled over the letter. It struck her as being characteristic and abrupt, even faintly ironical. She told herself that she had not expected any such communication from him, and yet, somehow, she had expected it.

She replied that she would like to see Shelleys, and that she would drive down after tea to-morrow—about five o'clock. If the hour was unsuitable would he please fix a time and let her know?

He replied that the hour would suit him admirably. The workmen left at five. He said quite frankly that he did not like workmen about the place, they did not belong to it.

Margaret Paradell left her car outside the gates of Shelleys, and she saw the old sunlit house as a warm redness beyond the trees. She

found Cosgrave walking up and down on the terrace, but before they met she had had one or two glimpses of the garden, and if it had astonished her, her astonishment was tinged with pleasure. It was the garden of Shelleys as it always should have been, mingling sleekness with tangled mystery, well-kept grass dappled with soft shadows, colour massed in secret vistas, here and there a white statue poised against a dark background of yews and hollies. She saw none of the mess and disorder so beloved by the working man who seems to delight in multiplying his rubbish dumps as though they emphasized the dignity of toil.

"It was good of you to come."

He still suggested defiance, but there was something more subtle behind it.

The housekeeper was waiting for them and guided them over the house. The Burgoyne furniture had been bought with it, but Margaret Paradell noticed that some superb oak and some pictures had been added, also some beautiful reproductions of Jacobean tapestry and printed linens. But what struck her most was that nothing had been touched—nothing that mattered. Here and there she saw a ladder and some sheets, or a window covered temporarily while its rotten casements were replaced.

Cosgrave watched her face. When they returned down the gracious old oak staircase to the hall he dismissed the housekeeper.

"I want to ask your advice."

"Well—?"

"It is a question of some pictures—where to hang them."

"What are they?"

"Two Constables, three Cotmans, and several others."

"A Cotman! He has three Cotmans?"

He detected a note of bitterness in her exclamation.

"Yes. Three exquisite things. After all, why shouldn't he?"

He saw a faint flush on her face.

By Warwick Deeping

"If he loves them—yes," she admitted.

"He—does—love them. But where do you suggest?"

She suggested the drawing-room; the light was good; it had been treated in the French style—soft grey with touches of gold. He agreed.

"I thought you would suggest that," he said.

She gave him a quick yet veiled glance. There was no need for her to ask him for his reason.

And then they found themselves on the steps at the end of the terrace and going down to the pool.

"Now, what is his sin, will you tell me?"

She paused, and remained standing half-way down that grey stairway.

"He is not one of us."

"No."

She had a glimpse of his face.

"Listen!" he said almost fiercely.

"Imagine a man who had to fight in his youth, who had to spend his best years doing things which he hated. Imagine success—of a sort—overwhelming him—unexpectedly—strangely. Imagine a man lonely in the midst of it all, a man who had made a mistake in the one great thing which matters—marriage. Imagine him setting his teeth and going forward, burying himself in his business, giving his spare time to the one thing which lasts—beauty. Very good. The time comes when the man chooses to break free. He is alone; he has made the vulgar thing of his creation something better and more human than other affairs of its kind. He says to himself: 'I will have a home, some place which I can love, mellow, beautiful and old.' He comes down into the country and he discovers—what?"

She stood very still, looking down at the pool with its white lilies and the sheen of silver about the smooth, green leaves.

"Prejudice?"

"That he is a vulgar beast, that he is to be ostracized, driven out, because he made money by selling a

substitute for honest butter! Suppose the man had a child, that he wanted beauty—pleasant, spacious homeliness—for his child even more than for himself? How would he feel if his neighbours hurt her, humiliated her——?"

"Stop!" she said suddenly. "You seem to think——"

But he did not stop.

"Well, there it is. But the man has pride. He does not mean to be driven out. His love of this place will satisfy him."

"And the child?" she asked.

"There is no child." And then he added: "But there might be."

She completed the descent to the pool. If there was one place in the garden more sacred to her than any other it was this great cistern surrounded by its red brick paths, raised borders and stone balustrade. She paused and looked at her reflection in the water. Ten years ago she had looked at the same reflection, on a June evening—and with another man. How absurd life was! Poor Rupert Burgoyne! What had made her fall in love with that rather futile and good-looking waster who had ended by leaving his sheep's head to bleach in an Australian desert? She remembered the other man and the present.

"We abuse prejudice," she said; "but how necessary it is."

"I admit that," he answered, "provided that it is passionate—and not cold."

The intimacy of his attack did not surprise her. She knew now how she had provoked his defiance, and conflict may provide subtle and pleasurable emotions. Her aloofness and her reserve had hidden a quick appreciation of anything that was male.

"Perhaps you will tell me," she said, "why you are so fierce in your justification of Mr. Jellaby."

"Certainly. I am Jellaby."

She said nothing. She had guessed it half an hour ago.

But presently she walked to the stone seat at one end of the pool and

"Jellaby"

sat down. He followed her and remained standing behind the seat, his hands resting on the back. Then she spoke.

"And your present name?"

He watched her profile.

"My mother's name. I took it some years ago, and handed over the patronymic to the firm. My father was a county doctor, one of the best men who ever lived, in spite of that atrocious name. The Cosgraves—well, the Cosgraves had been a family with traditions. I believe in traditions."

She smiled.

"And you—are just a little quixotic! You rode down to challenge us here with the Jellaby label on your flag. What was the idea—sincerity—an ironical defiance?"

"Is it better to be an ancestor," he said, "or to boast of your ancestors? Perhaps I ought to resume the name of Jellaby."

"Is it necessary?" she asked. "Supposing you had a child, would you prefer—?"

He looked at her with a smile of homage.

"You know the way to hang a picture. Where a Cotman should be placed. Yes, I think that settles it."

But she kept his secret, and she prevailed upon him to let it remain a secret for still another six months.

"You and I will have the laugh of our lives," she told him one day when he was having tea with her at Oak Royal. "Mr. James Cosgrave is accepted. They cannot go back on their verdict."

"They!" he echoed. "So, after all, you are on my side?"

"I am on the side of Shelleys."

"In spite of Oak Royal?"

"Did you ever see an uglier place?" she asked him.

There was no doubt about it. Bracknell Vale had accepted Mr. Cosgrave. He had that mellowness, that indefinable something which money cannot buy. Sir Hakluyt Honeyman was always quoting him: "Cosgrave this" and "Cosgrave that." Mrs. Polperro spoke of him in terms of endearment.

But what of Jellaby? The fellow was a long time in arriving! And Cosgrave was strangely reticent about Jellaby!

Late in the autumn the fruit of the conspiracy fell ripe and plump into the Vale's lap. Cosgrave was to marry Lady Margaret Paradell!

"My dear, I'm delighted," said Mrs. Polperro; "such a sahib. I suppose you will keep on Oak Royal?"

Lady Margaret's eyes were serious with hidden smiles.

"No, we think of letting it. We prefer Shelleys."

Mrs. Polperro sat dumb for a moment.

"Shelleys! But——?"

And then her eyes twinkled. She drew a deep breath, held it, and burst out laughing.

"Well, I'm——!"

The joke was against the Vale, but the Vale took it with the good humour of Mrs. Polperro.

WARWICK DEEPING.



ONE of the principal axioms of the twentieth century business man is that the quality of an article is to an ever increasing extent dependant upon the conditions under which it is produced; hence it is that such wonderful communities as Bournville have grown up and come to be recognized everywhere as models of high efficiency and first-class output.

Messrs. Cadbury Bros. maintain that ideal conditions contribute to ideal productions, and the chocolates which they are putting on the market this winter season give every support to this claim. The problem of gifts is often a difficult one, but the giver who decides upon some chocolates from Bournville is in little danger of going astray.

Strand Aug 1935

ALL IN

(27)

WARWICK DEEPING

Illustrated by
STEVEN SPURRIER, R.B.A.

AN immense young man in grey flannel trousers and brown sports jacket, he leaned upon the railings of Canville Plage and gazed at the sea. It was a summer sea, blue and placid, and the young man's eyes were blue, but not quite so placid as the sea. He had a large brown dreamy face, and wheat-coloured hair. An empty briar pipe was stuck in the corner of his mouth, a pathetic pipe. He had not been able to smoke for three days.

Yes, the situation was exceedingly awkward. He owed Madame of the Panier d'Or a three weeks' hotel bill, and Madame had been kind to him. Everybody was kind to Jack Barclay, and that had been part of his trouble. He had no money with which to pay Madame, or the price of a ticket to take him elsewhere, and those confounded and crusty trustees of his were behaving like curmudgeons.

Certainly, he had got through rather a lot of money, and that unfortunate case in which he had played the Galahad, defended women and kicked a somewhat eminent gentleman downstairs, had involved his trustees in damages and costs. Old Cust had called him a silly ass. Old Cust had said, "It is a good thing, young man, that your father took the precaution of leaving you in our hands until the age of six and twenty. There will be economies until these costs are settled."

Damn old Cust! But, certainly, he had behaved like a silly ass. He was for ever getting himself involved in magnanimous situations that were no concern of his.

"What you want is a job, young man. Hard work. You lost the only job we could find you. Go away and think."

Meanwhile, another six months would have to elapse before he would be free of Cust and Co., and his pockets were empty, and he was feeling sensitive about consuming any more of the good Madame's food. There had been other occasions when he had found himself marooned, but not so seriously as this. What an ass he had been to lend money to that plausible person who had told him a tale about a stolen wallet and a wife suddenly and seriously ill in Sheffield! Yes, it really was time for him to stop being such a soft-hearted mutt.

But some other person had been observing Jack Barclay for the last two or three days, a little swarthy Hebrew in ornamental clothes, and on this particular morning he strolled to the railings and placed himself within a yard of the very large young man.

"Lovely morning."

The stranger's English was impeccable, more so than his clothes, and Jack looked at him slantwise, and removing the pipe from his mouth, agreed that the day was lovely. The Jew, with a shrewd glance at that empty pipe, produced a cigar case.

"Have one."

But Jack had become suddenly suspicious of life, especially so on the plage of a popular French pleasure resort.

"What's the game?"

His neighbour looked amused.

"My name's Rosenstein. Have a cigar. No charge."

Jack was not feeling like a cigar. He would have preferred a large meal.

"No thanks, not smoking."

"My name's Rosenstein."

But Jack's blue eyes did not betray any



"I suppose it's unkind of me," she said, "but I shall come and see the show."

His reaction was instant.

"Oh, I say, please don't do that."

illumination. Was he expected to be familiar with the name?

"So you said. Mine's Barclay."

"Pleased to meet you. No offence if I inquire if you happen to want a job?"

Jack stared. "No. What sort of a job?"

"Don't you go to the casino?"

"Haven't been there for a fortnight."
 "Ah, that explains it. Haven't you seen the posters?"

"No."

"I must tell my pub. agent about that."

Jack shifted his position on the railings.

"Sorry I'm so ignorant."

"Ever done any wrestling?"

"I've boxed a bit, and had some lessons in jiu-jitsu."

"Ah," said Mr. Rosenstein, "that sounds like business," and, as a matter of fact, Mr. Barclay had boxed more than a bit. It had been difficult to find amateurs capable of coping with him. He was so exceptionally large and strong that he had exterminated most opponents even with sweet and smiling good temper. And for a Colossus he was unusually quick on his feet.

"What's the idea?"

Mr. Rosenstein smiled upon him.

"Ever heard of All-In Wrestling?"

Jack had. It was a rather dubious sport.

"Well, I'm taking a show round Europe. Doing pretty well with it, too. Fact is, my English heavyweight has let me down. Got peevish, because you see, Mr. Barclay, in France a Frenchman must always win."

"I see," said Jack.

Mr. Rosenstein went on smiling.

"I have to think of crowd psychology. I have to get the ladies. You're the sort of fellow they like to look at, and feel a little sorry for."

"Because," said Jack, "I get licked."

"Exactly. Of course, my French heavyweight has to be top-dog here. And in Hamburg—"

"The German wins."

"Exactly."

"So, the English fellow has to go all round Europe getting licked?"

"That's the idea, Mr. Barclay."

"Is that why the other fellow quitted?"

"In a sort of a way it was."

"And you are inviting me to be the victim?"

"I am."

Jack Barclay laughed. "Thanks. And what would you pay me?"

"Two hundred francs a night in this place. We show twice a week. Full houses."

"And doesn't anyone jump to the fact that your show is an ingenious fake?"

Mr. Rosenstein smiled upon him.

"Well, you see, Mr. Barclay, in a popular place like this no one stays much more than a fortnight, so we can repeat, so to speak, and always have 'em fresh and innocent. Well, what do you say?"

"I'll think it over," said Jack.

"That's right. Here's my card. Come and see me at the Grand Hotel and have some dinner."

"And when would you want me to begin?"

"To-morrow night. We could put you through the mill to-morrow morning."

"I'm not quite in training."

Mr. Rosenstein patted his shoulder.

"That's nothing. You'll be coached. You've only got to put up a passable show. Auguste won't be rough with you—really rough—unless you hurt him."

"And who is Auguste?"

"Le Diable Noir. Never heard of him?"

"No. Your French heavyweight?"

"Exactly."

ANOTHER person had been observing Jack Barclay on the plage, but since he stood six foot three inches, and she was just five feet or so, Jack's glances had gone over her head. Miss Gracie Goodenough was not used to that sort of thing. Not that Miss Goodenough jumped at you. Far from it. As a Yorkshire girl whose parents had left her a comely if cheeky little face, ten thousand a year, and a very pragmatical philosophy, Miss Goodenough was accustomed to be noticed. She was supposed to have a contempt for men, largely because they had appeared so eager to be interested in her.

Miss Goodenough had a suite at the Grand. Also, Mr. Rosenstein, who admired good looks and respected money, had fallen to the admirable combination of these qualities in Gracie, but paternally so. He had tried to persuade her to come and see his "Show," but she had said that she was not interested in seeing men savaging each other.

Jack, entering the lounge of the Grand Hotel to accept Mr. Rosenstein's dinner and business proposal, became the predestined victim of yet another situation. Jack was in mufti; he had no evening shirt fit for the occasion. Mr. Rosenstein, who had been watching for him, rose from a chair.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Barclay. This means yes?"

Jack smiled at him.

"It does."

"Good business. Sit down. What'll you have?"

"A Sidecar."

"Waiter, one Sidecar and a dry Martini. Smoke?"

"May I wait!" said Jack.

Now, Jack had a very empty stomach, and perhaps the cocktail and the prospect of table d'hôte made him more appreciative, but when Miss Goodenough appeared from somewhere and was gracious to Mr. Rosenstein, John thought her the most attractive thing he had seen ever. In fact,

he had an absurd attack of what used to be called love at first sight, and it was his first genuine experience.

John was introduced. Miss Goodenough had looked at Mr. Rosenstein in a particular sort of way, and Mr. Rosenstein was not exactly slow.

"Join us in a little drink, Miss Gracie?"

She did. And John accepted a second cocktail. A pleasant warmth had gone to his heart and stomach.

"Staying here, Mr. Barclay?"

He was. He could not help it, and perhaps Miss Goodenough's shrewd surmises were trailing the truth. What was old Rosenstein after, dining this big, gentlemanly boy? Surely, Mr. Barclay was not to be a performer in Mr. Rosenstein's disgusting show? And, if so, why?

But Miss Goodenough's curiosity was not to be satisfied that evening. Mr. Rosenstein carried Jack off to dinner, and the dinner that Jack ate might have been described by the French as formidable. Afterwards, he smoked two of Mr. Rosenstein's large cigars, and was feeling convinced that Mr. Rosenstein was not a bad sort of person.

This impresario of Le Sport, however, attended to business. He seemed to understand that Jack and Miss Goodenough were best kept apart, for a young man in love is apt to be less docile. He took Jack to the gymnasium and introduced him to one Bobbie Lee, a lean, crumpled American who acted as trainer and technical adviser, and who sometimes wrestled under the name of the Detroit Devil when necessity required it.

"Mr. Barclay, meet Mr. Lee."

Rosenstein had explained Jack to his assistant, and Jack smiled at the American. He liked the look of him, and the liking was mutual.

"I want you to put Mr. Barclay wise tomorrow."

"Sure, I will, costume, and boots and everything."

Bobbie Lee's fathering of John was thorough. When he had observed and felt John's muscles he grew lyrical. "Boy, but you should be in a big business." The American took John upon the mat, and having tied him into a nice knot, urged him to get out of it. John did so, and the American sat on the floor and grinned at him. "Boy, you're not so green as you look." John smiled at him. "I used to box a bit, and wrestle." Bobbie patted his knee.

"Now, listen. I'll put you wise to some of the tricks, and de-monstrate. Auguste's great on the scissors. Have you heard of strangle-holds, and Half Nelsons, and arm twisting, and smacking kidneys, and bumping the solar plexus?"

The American and Jack squirmed about on the floor together, and the Yankee sweated.

"Say, you'll have to be careful or you'll hurt Auguste, and if you hurt him he'll get nasty."

"What's the result?"

"Boy, he'll kick you under the ribs. It's not nice to be kicked by Auguste."

"I'll try not to provoke it," said Jack.

Mr. Lee reported favourably upon John.

"He's a great boy. He'll do, if he doesn't lose his temper."

"I'll speak to him seriously about it," said Mr. Rosenstein.

LATER in the morning Jack met his opponent, Auguste, and from that moment the affair ceased to be an irresponsible commercial adventure. Auguste was a mountain of a man, fat, sallow, and swarthy, a truculent person, flashy and scented. He looked at John as a maître d'hôtel might regard a very raw young waiter. And, for the first time John began to suffer inward qualms. Was he to be mauled and sat upon by that exceedingly unpleasant person?

During the afternoon this unconsenting feeling was reinforced. He had allowed himself lunch at the Panier d'Or, for he would soon be in a position to pay Madame what he owed her. Strolling past the casino he met Miss Goodenough. His rather shabby hat came off.

"Lovely weather."

Sudden shyness overcame him. There was something in this solid little person's eyes that troubled him.

"I was looking at the posters."

"Oh, yes, the posters."

She turned towards a large board which advertised flamboyantly the evening's programme. John saw himself billed as Jack Smith the English Lion, who was to engage in fierce combat with the redoubtable Diable Noir.

"Is that you?"

"It is."

Why this severity? Jack began to feel uncomfortable.

"What are you doing this for?"

"Oh, just fun."

"Don't be silly. Getting mixed up in a disgusting show like this!"

"Is it disgusting? I'm sorry."

"I suppose you have to."

"Well, in a way, yes."

"On the rocks?"

"Temporarily."

"Hadn't you better tell me about it?"

John stared down at her. Well, really, she was a rather forceful little person! He rather liked it. So many women——. And then, he smiled.



Picking him up and carrying him like a baby to the ropes, John found himself confronting Mr. Rosenstein. "Sorry, Mr. Rosenstein," John said.

"May I? I'm such a silly ass. Always getting into trouble."

"I should say so."

She took him to a seat on the plage, and looking at the blue sea, and at her, Jack made a complete confession of his foolishnesses. She was sympathetic but severe. She said, "It seems to me that you are just a big, good-natured baby. Really, you want smacking."

Jack laughed.

"Perhaps I do. It might depend on who did it. You see, I always feel sorry for people."

"You would. And I suppose you are going on with this disgusting business?"

"I owe the hotel a two-weeks' bill. They have been kind to me."

She nodded at him.

"That big beast of a Frenchman won't be so kind. It's a horrible idea, letting yourself be——"

Jack looked whimsical.

"Sorry. It can't be helped. I have given my word to Mr. Rosenstein."

"So kind of Mr. Rosenstein, isn't it?"

He winced.

"Don't be too hard on a chap. I hate letting people down."

She said: "I suppose it's unkind of me, but I shall come and see the show."

His reaction was instant.

"Oh, I say, please don't do that. I would so much rather you didn't."

She said: "Nothing will prevent me from coming."

John's impressions of the evening were to be more than vivid. Heat, a glare

looked through a squint-hole at that French crowd, and he had not liked it. Also, he had discovered in the front row of the forty-franc seats the face of Grace Goodenough.

Confound it, she might have kept away!

John returned to his hard chair, and sat down on it, and the American observed him.

"Boy, put on a grin."



of light, faces, silly animal faces that emitted menagerie noises, Auguste in flame-coloured tights, Mr. Rosenstein in evening-dress, the referee in white trousers and a bright-blue sweater. The heavyweight dish was a delicacy to be kept until the crowd's appetite had been piqued, and John sat on a hard chair behind the scenes and talked to Bob Lee, who was seconding him. He had

"Was I looking grim?"

"Blue murder. Make it easy. Auguste's in a bad temper."

He was. Jack found himself sitting on a chair in a corner of the white-roped, carpeted ring confronting that very enormous mass of flesh. Mr. Rosenstein was announcing

the great occasion. France *versus* England, primitive antipathies! And then the gong sounded, and Jack, holding out a friendly hand to his advancing opponent, was saluted with a smack in the face.

The crowd yelled. But if John was moved for a moment to lose his temper, he had other and violent matters to engage his attention. He was down on the floor, squirming under the bulk of Auguste, and his business was to resist to the best of his ability. Auguste panted and made fierce wet noises. He got Jack's head locked between his great fat thighs. But Auguste also had a part to play; he had been told to allow this novice some share in the display before spificating him, and Jack, with a feeling of heat and of nausea, was allowed to escape from the scissors. He tried a jiu-jitsu trick on Auguste, and suddenly the Frenchman growled at him. John remembered his part, and desisted, and after twenty minutes of contorted struggle, Jack's shoulders were pinned to the floor.

The crowd howled its delight.

Jack got up and smiled at the crowd. Some of the women applauded him. He really was such a fine figure of a man, though English.

Jack did not look in Miss Goodenough's direction. He was not feeling happy about her share in the show.

Said the American to Jack, "Boy, well grinned. I'd like to see you let loose on Auguste after I'd fathered you for a week. He's a sack of fat and swank. But go easy."

In the second round Auguste allowed Jack to get him tied up and provoke the crowd, but when the round looked like going to the Englishman Auguste growled. John hesitated for an instant. He had more than a feeling that if he wished it he could lay the Black Devil out, but he remembered his part, and let Auguste wriggle free and reverse the situation.

Again the crowd howled.

Mr. Rosenstein came into the ring and acclaimed the victor. France had sat upon Perfidious Albion. There would be a return match at the end of the week.

Jack changed his clothes, and with two hundred francs in his pocket, and Mr. Rosenstein's approval, he left the building, feeling sore, both physically and mentally. He had had Auguste's great foot under his jaw; Auguste had twisted arms and over-flexed knees, and punched loins. And then Jack was aware of a little figure waiting for him in the glare of the electric lights.

He raised a hat and made himself smile.

"I hope you enjoyed it."

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"I say, isn't that rather rough on me?"

"I've earned two hundred francs to give the hotel people."

"A nice way of paying your debts."

"Do you mean I ought not to pay them?"

"I don't mean anything of the kind. You shouldn't be such an ass as to get into such a situation."

Jack felt peeved.

"Look here, I'd rather be twisted by that fellow than have you cutting me up."

"Is that so?"

"Strange but true."

"Well, think it over. No, I'm taking a taxi to the hotel, thank you. Good night, Mr. Barclay. I'm sorry to have to be so frank."

JACK passed three unhappy days. He called at the Grand Hotel and Miss Goodenough was always out or engaged. He hung about the place. He persuaded Bobbie Lee to coach him in the gymnasium. For illumination and a slow anger were coming to John. Did an Englishwoman really object to seeing an Englishman licked by a foreigner, or was her prejudice particular and personal? John kept his mouth shut, but he wrestled for three hours a day with the American until Bobbie Lee began to protest.

"Say, boy, you're getting too rough and nasty. That hurt."

"Sorry, Bob. I was feeling for a moment that you were Auguste."

The American looked hard at him.

"Feeling like that?"

"I am."

And suddenly Bobbie Lee grinned.

"Hell with the lid off. Oh, boy! It would tickle me to death to see you do it."

"Do you think I could do it?"

"I should say you could."

On the afternoon before the show Jack did manage to waylay the little lady. He looked at her with a whimsical, shy smile.

"Suppose you won't be there to-night?"

"Most certainly not."

"I'm sorry."

"Sorry!"

"Well, you see, I did think of trying to put up a better show. Of course, one shouldn't break one's contract, but I'd like to try and annoy that French crowd."

Her eyes seemed to emit a little flash.

"What a savage you are!"

"No, not really. I'd just like to assert my dignity."

"I see. Struggling with that great fat beast!"

Jack smiled at her, and raised his hat.

"Well, I'm sorry you won't be there. I quite understand. I shall get Mr. Rosenstein to pay me in advance. It's safer."

And still smiling, he left her meditating

A minute before the curtain went up Jack found Bobbie Lee squinting through a peep-hole at the audience.

"Full house."

"May I have a look?"

"Sure."

John looked, and there in the front row he saw Miss Goodenough. So she had overcome her squeamishness, or had he contrived to interest her in the return match? Mr. Rosenstein was putting on the two heavy-weights at the rise of the curtain, and, incidentally, he had told Auguste to make a rough house of it, because certain officious people had been hinting that the show was faked.

"Boy, has the boss told you?"

"What?"

"It's to be all out and all in. Auguste's to pitch you into the orchestra."

"Oh, is he! No, Mr. Rosenstein hasn't told me. I think he might have done."

"Maybe he thinks it kinder to keep you green."

At this particular moment Auguste himself appeared. He, too, was interested in the audience, and Jack happened to have his eye to the peephole. The Frenchman said something particularly rude to Jack, and smacked him in a certain place. John smiled and stood aside, but the American saw that his eyes had a blue glare.

JACK BARCLAY'S temper needed a great deal of losing, but once lost, the resulting madness was apt to be catastrophic, nor was the evening's show according to plan. Jack sat on his stool, with that blue glare fixed on the Frenchman. When the gong sounded he was out of his corner like a thunderbolt. No doubt his ferocity took Auguste by surprise, but there were other matters to surprise the Frenchman. This was no staged fight. Jack gave Auguste a mighty cuff across the face, and with Auguste staggering, he leapt upon him, heaved him up, and crashed him to the boards. It was all over in ten seconds. Jack had pinned the shocked giant's shoulders to the floor.

The crowd was angry and yelling.

John smiled at them.

Auguste, white as chalk, sat and glared at John.

Said the American to John: "Say, boy, that was great. Watch him. He'll come out of his corner and kick you. That's Auguste's game when he's mad. Don't rush him this go. Watch for that leg."

The American proved a true prophet. When the gong sounded Auguste came out of

his corner with a sly and ugly smile on his face. He put up his hands, but the gesture was a feint. He measured his distance, and up came that leg. Jack swung back and the foot missed him by an inch, but his hands caught the Frenchman's ankle.

The crowd saw Jack's body and arms strain back as at a rope. He jerked Auguste into the air. The mass of him seemed to hang horizontal for a moment, and then crashed to the boards, his head rebounding from them.

There was silence. The referee was counting, and signing to Jack to keep off. But Auguste did not stir. That fall had knocked him out.

Then a strange thing happened. Someone was waving a programme and cheering, a woman. Other women began to clap, and suddenly that French crowd, catching the infection, commenced to cheer. Jack stood and smiled at them; he shook his clasped hands at them, and then turned to where Auguste had become conscious and groaning. John bent down and picking the great thing up, and carrying him like a baby to the ropes, found himself confronting Mr. Rosenstein.

"Sorry, Mr. Rosenstein."

But the little Jew was beaming at him.

"Listen to 'em, Mr. Barclay, listen to 'em! Will anybody say my show isn't genuine?"

John passed Auguste over the ropes to the two seconds. He turned, waved again to the crowd, and disappeared.

She was waiting for him in the white glare of the lights, walking sedately up and down, solidly untroubled by casual male glances. After all, if any Continental cad became impertinent she would have a champion who could make things very unpleasant for any such gentleman. As a woman she liked that sense of security. And then she saw Jack Barclay, and Jack saw her. She still had her programme in her hand, and she fluttered it at him.

Jack, hat in hand, stood looking down at her.

"Wasn't it you who started the applause?"

"I'm ashamed to say it was."

"Thank you. Well, that settles my hotel bill. And Mr. Rosenstein wants me—"

She tapped his arm with her programme. "No more Mr. Rosenstein. If you want me to be friends with you."

"I do, most awfully."

"Very well. What you need, my lad, is someone to look after you."

"Will you?"

"I might. We'll see."

The Mysterious

Cosmo Bellairs

By Warwick Deeping

THE STORYTELLER
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(28)

" 'Well, anyway,' said Porteous, 'I'll bet you half a dozen tennis balls that you are not the author.' "

" Wedgwood went off to adjust one of the nets. "

" His silence, and his air of 'I could if I would,' provoked further mystery. In fact, his silence became a sort of Pharaoh's tomb over which the cultured portion of Westonbury gossiped and argued. "



ROMANCE still lingers. Even little heads hidden under cloche hats create something out of nothing, or much out of the very little. The cult of the exterior continues to be popular, the illusion of "looks," the wreath of mystery with which the feminine mind crowns a particular sort of man.

"He's so—interesting—my dear."

How bad it may be for a man to appear interesting is largely his own affair. Doubtless most men like it, and especially the kind of man who has always posed to himself, and who has an instinct for the dramatic, and for holding the centre of the stage. Wedgwood had that. Also he had looks. "Such a strong face, my dear." He had a chin, deep-set eyes, an air of Tennysonian darkness, a deep and musical voice. He gave the Westonbury world silences that were interesting, because they suggested profound thoughts, and the power to say so much—if he chose to say it. When a man has a presence and physical impressiveness there are certain women who cannot believe that silence implies sterility.

But Anthony Wedgwood was not silent. He cultivated a dramatic reticence. If you met him at a garden-party—and he did go to garden-parties, wearing the most

aesthetic of rough tweeds—he would stand and stare at a rose bush or a dish of cakes—and utter some profundity. Analysed, his profundities were less profound than they seemed, but when a man of Wedgwood's physical calibre utters them—certain feminine creatures experience remarkable shivers of secret delight.

His age was thirty-seven. He had been a schoolmaster until someone had left him some money. Also, he was a bachelor. He lived in a romantic little old house at the end of Abbey Lane, a house with a white classic porch, and mysterious windows, and a stone wall over which lilac and laburnum trailed their branches. "Abbey Cottage" was painted in white upon a black board attached to the little green iron gate.

Mr. Wedgwood wrote.

Occasionally he had an article accepted by one of the more serious magazines, or perhaps one should say by one of those magazines which took themselves as seriously as Mr. Wedgwood took himself. Westonbury read him sometimes in a fortnightly or quarterly Review. He was a stylist, and very academic, though he had a liking for a fanciful title, and the spreading of a peacock's tail. Westonbury read one rather learned article headed "Josephus in Spain," and rose from it wondering what Spain had to do with Josephus, or Josephus with Spain. But that was part of Mr. Wedgwood's genius. He was sup-

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posed to be so subtle, "A deep thinker, you know."

Such was this gentleman's reputation. How satisfied he was with it he alone knew; though, as a matter of fact, he was not at all satisfied with it.

The popular taste was so crude, so sexual. And publishers' readers! Yes, there was every indication of decadence.

It so happened that the younger Miss Mummery went to stay with a married sister who lived at Ealing. Miss Mummery had literary tendencies, and so had Mrs. Lovelock her married sister. Mrs. Lovelock belonged to the New Minerva Club, to whose dinners members who were nobodies brought other nobodies to meet somebody who was somebody. Much literary gossip drifted about among the members of the Minerva Club, and at the May dinner Miss Mummery sat next to a knowledgeable person who appeared to know exactly what sort of nib John Galsworthy used, and how long Arnold Bennett took to write a thousand words.

Miss Mummery happened to mention Westonbury, and the knowledgeable person pricked up her ears.

"Westonbury? Now—that's very intriguing. I have it on good authority that Cosmo Bellairs is living at Westonbury."

Miss Mummery moulded her lips as though to say "Oo!"

"Cosmo Bellairs?"

"I'm told so. But—then—of course you know——"

"I'm—very—ignorant——"

"That nobody knows——"

"No?"

"Who Cosmo Bellairs really is."

"A pseudonym?"

"Exactly. The identity is most carefully concealed."

"Is it—a man—or——"

The knowledgeable person crumbled bread.

"If you have read 'Hyssop'—it should be obvious to you that such a book could have been written only by an exceedingly male person."

"Yes—of course."

"A flagrantly male person, a little — old-fashioned god in trousers. I attacked the book in an article I wrote for the *New Elysium*."

"Indeed," said Miss Mummery; "how—very—interesting."

It—was—very interesting, for at the end of the week Miss Mummery returned to Westonbury, full of London and Ealing and a concert and two theatres and the dinner at the Minerva Club, but, of course, her unique piece of plunder was the news that Cosmo Bellairs was living at Westonbury. Amazing discovery! And the opportunity was hers. "My dear, who—do—you think is living in Westonbury? You'll never guess. No. Cosmo Bellairs. I was told so at a literary dinner in London by Miss Pym, the essayist." For Cosmo Bellairs was one of the novelists of the moment. He was a swashbuckling, romantic, delightful soul who had fluttered the libraries very considerably, and had persisted in remaining obscure.

Seated in a corner of a third-class compartment on the Westonbury train, Miss Alice Mummery asked herself the inevitable question: "Who can it be?" For Westonbury, compactly arranged about its cathedral, had every house and its occupants nicely catalogued. It was as authentic as the Ark or the Zoo.

Yes, who could it be? Inevitably she was led to the delightful assumption that there was but one person in Westonbury who could be Cosmo Bellairs. Mr. Anthony Wedgwood. Obviously. It was like him to cultivate a mysterious and modest anonymity, and to enjoy the subtle humour of the situation. The sage of Abbey Cottage was so subtle.

"Of course," said Miss Mummery to the English landscape, "it—must be—Mr. Wedgwood. Who else could it be? Besides, he is just the man to write those wonderful and romantic books."

But to exclude other possibilities she considered the persons and the capabilities of Westonbury's latest importations. Young Vyse, Dr. Paton's new partner? O, no—such an obvious young man. Or Mr. Tolhurst who had come to manage one of the banks? Impossible. Or Mr. Porteous, the new curate at St. James's? Absurd. He was a common little man, fat, and incipiently bald, and he smoked a pipe in the streets.

But for the unwisdom of half a dozen adoring women, and the inverted vanity of a man, this comedy might never have developed. Also, it was to have its spice of romance. The Misses Mummery and their ilk belonged to a previous generation, a generation with a penchant for regarding all men as wonderful. The younger generation had no such illusions.

Translated to the courts of the Westonbury tennis-club, the comedy became a topical affair.

Wedgwood played very good tennis. Here—also—he was a stylist. Moreover, he preferred the play of the young things—and their hard drivings and volleyings to the old-fashioned scoopings of the Mummery generation. He had reached an age when he insisted upon youth—his own youth.

"What can you do, old thing?"

That was youth's question. Can you put top-spin on your drive, and bring off a nice drop-volley? Wedgwood could do both. He had coached one or two of the young things, and himself into thinking little Corah Lutyens a very marriageable proposition. She was an orphan; she lived with two aunts; she had money. She was a bare-armed, short-skirted maiden, with as pretty and swinging a drive—both forehand and backhand—as could be seen in the west country.

But she was completely without reverence for the creature—man.

She took man for what he was, or for what she thought him to be. She could lick nine men out of ten

in an open single. In an exhibition game she had run Wedgwood to three sets.

"I'll lick you next year."

She had said it without arrogance, and a shake of her bobbed head. She was not an adorer. She was one-and-twenty, and dark as a purple pansy, with one of those little, pale, irregular faces that always seem unexpected. She called Mr. Wedgwood "Tony," and if he happened to be off his game she told him so.

Wedgwood's temperament was that of the eternal schoolmasters. If he was a very vain and ambitious man, he could respond to the provocation of this little, fearless boy-girl who looked him straight in the face and never read the quarterly reviews.

In fact, he fell in love with her, or felt for her what a Wedgwood man would catalogue as love. He wanted to possess this pretty, vital creature, to make of her his own pet, devoted, nicely disciplined schoolboy. Her refusal to be impressed piqued him rather savagely. He would teach her a thing or two.

Meanwhile, Miss Alice Mummery was going about breathing the news.

"O—have you heard that Cosmo Bellairs is living here?" In a little while all Westonbury had heard it, and their conjectures were hunting the secret celebrity. Miss Mummery continued to point a wise finger.

"Isn't obvious? It—must—be Mr. Wedgwood."

In fact, so sure was she, and so devoted an admirer of the great man, that, happening to call upon him in the course of her duties as secretary of the Westonbury Literary Society, she became audacious. She had been shown into Wedgwood's study. It was really a pet of a room—"So—male—you know, and literary"—full of pipes and belles-lettres—and French and German books, and solemn magazines. Miss Wedgwood was poking her nose into a book on German

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philosophy when Wedgwood came in.

"O, dear, how clever you are! Fancy reading this—and in German!"

Wedgwood had called her—in privacy—a fulsome fool.

"I have to," was his explanation, and he stood and waited. He did not ask her to sit down.

Miss Mummery had an attack of shyness, but at the end of the interview she contrived to cast her fly.

"I have heard that Cosmo Bellairs is living in Westonbury."

Wedgwood stared.

"Who?"

"Cosmo Bellairs—the novelist. Isn't it interesting?"

"I haven't met him. Or is it a she?"

Miss Mummery simpered.

"No one knows. But we have—suspicions. You see—it's a pseudonym—and, of course——"

Wedgwood had so stiff a face that she was sure that he was concealing a second self.

"Of course you have read 'Hyssop'?"

No, he hadn't, or said that he hadn't, and Miss Mummery did not believe him. He was playing a part; and so sure was she that she had discovered her mysterious Cosmo Bellairs that she went about hinting that Mr. Wedgwood had almost confessed to her that he was the author of "Hyssop."

"Of course, my dear, he made a pretence of keeping up the mystery—but I could see by his face—Yes, my intuition was right. 'Hyssop' was really written in Abbey Cottage."

The rumour spread itself at a moment when Wedgwood had arrived at a very delicate phase of the Lutyens courtship. He was not the sort of man to let himself go. He stood impressively in the centre of his world, and waited for the inevitable.

"Come hither, little thing. I have looked upon you with favour."

But Corah was not hithering. She

made no response to his very dignified gesture.

And then—one day—at the tennis club she rattled the rumour out at him in her frank and irreverent way.

"I say—Tony—is it true you wrote 'Hyssop'?"

It happened in the middle of the club tea, and Wedgwood was allowing two of the Mummery set to put milk and sugar in his tea, and hand him bread and butter. There was a silence. No doubt he was aware of the silence.

"Little girls shouldn't ask questions."

The little girl was not to be suppressed.

"Well, either you did or you didn't."

Somehow her tone suggested that Mr. Wedgwood was not Cosmo Bellairs, and that he had not the capacity for writing such a book as "Hyssop." There was an awkward little pause in the general chatter.

Then Wedgwood was heard to say: "Either I did or I didn't. Shall we equivocate?"

He smiled. Equivocate was a word with a particular scholarly flavour. But afterwards, when he was standing in the club-house doorway, lighting a pipe, he was exposed to a second assault.

"Well, did you or didn't you?"

He extinguished the match, and threw it into a flower-bed.

"What is your—private opinion?"

He was whimsical and just a little patronizing.

"I don't think you wrote it, Tony."

"O!" said he. "And why?"

"I don't believe you could."

Irreverently truthful child! No doubt he was nettled.

"Your opinion of my capacity implies doubt? But suppose we consider—the merits of 'Hyssop'? Is it a book?"

"It's jolly clever," said she.

"Clever! I don't think I should apply the word—clever. Don't you think it—a little crude?"

By Warwick Deeping

"It's a jolly honest book, a jolly fine book."

"Why not excise that rather superfluous and inaccurate adjective? Is everything 'jolly'—? Cake and eclipses—?"

"Don't be a prig, Tony."

And then a voice intervened, a man's voice. It came from one of the tables.

"Why not be candid about it, Wedgwood?"

Possibly the interference was uncalled for. Also, its source might be considered equivocal. Mr. Porteous was a curate, and a very new member of the club. He was round and brown and—yes—jolly. Corah's adjective did apply to Mr. Porteous. But he had no right to address Mr. Wedgwood as Wedgwood. He had no prestige. He played an abominable game of tennis, and said frankly that he preferred cricket. He had one of those rather obtrusive, cheery personalities, and on a hot day he added to your feeling of heat.

Mr. Wedgwood replied over an academic shoulder.

"Let us leave it to the gods—and the pulpit."

Someone laughed. Mr. Porteous joined in the laughter.

"It might be a woman," he said. "Will you take a bet on it, Wedgwood?"

Wedgwood's reply suggested that, though a cleric might write books, his rôle as a bookmaker was decidedly unusual.

"Well, anyway," said Porteous, "I'll bet you half a dozen tennis balls that you are not the author."

Wedgwood went off to adjust one of the nets.

His silence, and his air of "I could if I would" provoked further mystery. In fact, his silence became a sort of Pharaoh's tomb over which the cultured portion of Westbury gossiped and argued. There were many partisans like Miss Mummery who were firmly convinced that Mr. Wedgwood and Cosmo Bellairs were one and the

same person, and that the Lutyens girl had been very properly snubbed.

"These young things have no reverence, my dear."

It was an offence to her elders that Corah should call Mr. Wedgwood "Tony," and treat him with so little deference in public.

As for the Porteous man—he—of course, was jealous of the scholar and the man of letters. Mr. Porteous's deliveries were so conversational and lacking in dignity. Almost you could hear him saying: "Don't, you know—" at the end of each Commandment.

At all events, Wedgwood let people assume that he was or was not Cosmo Bellairs. His vanity had become involved in both directions. It had been said that he could not have written "Hyssop," which, of course, was offensive. It was also said that he had written "Hyssop," a popular novel, which statement might also be considered an offence. Wedgwood had written novels, but no novel of his had been published.

Had his vanity and his self-regard been less disingenuous he would not have put himself in a situation which was—to use his own word—equivocal. He could not quite decide which pose to adopt. "Yes, I may be Cosmo Bellairs," or "Produce stuff like 'Hyssop'! God forbid!" So he attitudinized between the two alternatives, balancing with a foot on each stool.

Moreover, he was piqued not a little by Corah Lutyens' sudden change of expression. Almost she came and sat at his feet with an air of "O! you wonderful man." Had any other girl done this Wedgwood would have accepted it as a phenomenon that was supremely natural or negligible, but there was something about Corah's innocence that left him vaguely groping. Surely—the little beggar—? No, that was unthinkable. She had no subtlety. No doubt she was beginning to respond.

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Yet, he was annoyed when he went down to the courts one June afternoon and found her playing in a mixed double with Bob Porteous as her partner. And she seemed to be enjoying it.

"Mine, Bob. Don't poach."

Bob, indeed! And Porteous was one of those very active players who rushed all over the court and smote at the ball with a strenuous futility and perspired.

Wedgwood stood and watched. He could despise Mr. Porteous's tennis, and feel smoothly contemptuous over it.

But what a bounding, enthusiastic fellow!

"O! well played, Corah. That's the stuff."

Stuff, indeed! And since when had he taken to calling Miss Lutyens "Corah"?

Wedgwood sneered.

"How's that? Out, I think, wasn't it?"

Mr. Porteous appealed to his partner.

"On the line," said Wedgwood tersely.

Porteous turned a brown face and smiled at him.

"Thanks, Wedgwood. I thought it was out. Sorry. Your point—you people."

But Wedgwood could not help noticing that Corah and her partner gave each other a funny look.

Later, when Wedgwood was sitting at ease in a deck-chair after effacing some other male in a single, his sweater thrown over his shoulders, and that slightly lionlike mane of his catching the sunlight, Corah appeared before him, demure and childlike.

"Do you want a four, Cosmo?"

Half a dozen people heard her use that name, and Wedgwood's acceptance of it. At all events, he did not chide her or deny the name's significance.

"In half an hour, if you like."

"Righto. I'll get Alice Mummery and Bob Porteous."

Wedgwood scrutinized the bowl of his pipe.

"He's not much good. Terrible rabbit."

"Oh, I'll take him," said she; "you can have Alice. That will square matters."

It did and it didn't. The game proved a very angular affair. It appeared to provoke some feeling between the two men, though Robert Porteous smiled all through it. And he played an unexpectedly good game. He was strenuous, but far less futile than usual.

Wedgwood played below his form. He was in a bad temper. He and Miss Mummery lost the first set.

"Buck up, Cosmo," said his protégé.

Alice Mummery was agitated and apologetic.

"I'm so sorry. I'm playing so—badly."

Wedgwood's silence allowed that she was.

In the second set he showed signs of temper. He drove several balls hard at Corah's partner, who dodged them and seemed amused, though the point was lost.

"You'll get me presently, Wedgwood."

But Miss Mummery and her partner lost the set.

It was obvious to most of the on-lookers that Mr. Wedgwood was huffed. He retired to the men's dressing-room, and when he reappeared it was to extract his bicycle from the cycle shed and wheel it towards the club gate. His weapons—two rackets done up in waterproof cases—were under his arm. Bayard was leaving the field.

Wedgwood had to pass in front of the club-house, and on the steps of it Corah Lutyens sat on a cushion observing the retreat of her mentor. She held a glass in her hand, and behind her Mr. Porteous was pouring out lemonade.

"You're not going now, are you, Cosmo?"

Being cumbered with rackets and bicycle he could not raise his hat

By Warwick Deeping

to her, but he inclined his head. The great man was offended.

Bob Porteous refilled his partner's glass.

"Bellairs is a good name. But I'm afraid——"

Miss Lutyens watched Wedgwood allowing the gate to slam behind him.

"Not so very belle, after all. I don't like bad losers."

But Wedgwood was to be a more complete loser than he knew. Your strokes may be very subtle, and you may conceal the direction of a shot, but equivocation has its limits. For a week or more Wedgwood contrived to equivocate, and then went to call on Miss Lutyens' aunts. He did things academically.

He supposed that they had no objection to his marrying their niece.

O! not at all. But, unfortunately, there was one very serious objection. The elder Miss Lutyens

looked coy; she had a sense of humour.

"Corah is engaged. It happened three days ago."

Mr. Wedgwood's face seemed to stiffen.

"Engaged!"

"Yes, to the novelist—Mr. Cosmo Bellairs."

Wedgwood got up from his chair. That fatal name! And there was a twinkle in Miss Lutyens' eyes.

"I see. That makes my proposal—a little—superfluous. Of course, you will regard—this interview—as confidential."

"Of course," said Miss Lutyens.

He made a stately digression towards the door.

"But would you mind telling me——"

"Cosmo Bellairs?"

"Exactly."

"My niece is engaged to Mr. Robert Porteous," said the aunt.

WARWICK DEEPING.



Days that are Past

They come so quietly
Again, the memoried hours,
Dropping upon my heart
Like dew on evening flowers.

They come so quietly
The rich, familiar words,
Brushing against my mind
Like wings of homing birds.

They come so quietly
Back to their place, those days,
Like a prayer prayed in the dark,
That in daylight stays.

MARION PEACOCK

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Suvla John

By Warwick Deeping

29

"I'm a wild man, Dick. I have been knocking about the world like a sort of wandering Jew. It's my life, and I love it. I could not lie in the same bed each night and wake up in the same bed each morning. That's the truth. My name is John Suvla. And sometimes I am a tramp, sometimes a soldier; any old wild game gets me by the heart!"



He came up the hill and through the red street of the old town, a tall man in the clothes of a tramp, swinging his squared shoulders, loins hollowed, head in the air. The brim of his green felt was turned down to keep the June sunlight out of his eyes. He walked with a swagger, a stout stick over his right shoulder, and an old canvas bag slung to it. His eyes surveyed the sleepy street with a grey and level audacity, seeming to see everything and to despise it; his short black beard clipped to a point was as sharp with scorn as were his eyes and his nostrils. He smiled, and his mouth was both laughing and cruel.

Three or four loafers held the pavement, heavy, stupid men, vacuously staring. They spat; they exchanged a few rare words, shuffled their feet, made bovine noises. The tramp bore down on the group, walking well in the middle of the pavement. He went through them as though they were animals made to shuffle out of his way. One man, a little more slow and sulky than the others, was touched by a swinging shoulder and persuaded into the gutter.

"Ere—I say——!"

The tramp passed on as though these Lymington loafers were less than dirt on the pavement. His scorn was a scorn that did not answer back. His audacious figure

swung along between the Georgian houses.

Beyond the church a constable turned and scrutinized him. The blue English eyes were both wise and puzzled, for the constable had seen something of the world and of men.

A tramp, yes, in shabby black jacket and trousers! They had been gentlemen's clothes, and the man wore them as though he knew it. His cocked head and swinging shoulders sent the world to blazes.

The constable watched him disappear, and drew certain shrewd conclusions. A "tough," a fine black-guard, a soldier, and a soldier who had known the inside of a Sam Browne belt. Fierce, too, with that smiling fierceness that makes a man feared. Not the sort of customer to be quarrelled with on the wrong side of the counter!

"He's struck it proud. Sort of chap who might have been in Ireland—putting hell——"

The constable ran a broad finger down a broad nose.

"I don't know. Something queer there. Hard as nails too, and big. No boozier. Oh well, let him go."

II

THE forest was all gold, for the sun was low and the soft evening brilliance of it lay upon the green world and gave it glamour. And it was very silent save for the singing of birds.

The man had paused under an old yew tree beside one of the forest

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rides, seeming part of the shadow of the tree, while the sunset deepened about him. The green pathway unrolled itself into the glooms, and was lost. From somewhere came the smell of an old thorn tree in flower.

The tramp stood very still, yet it was with the alert stillness of a man who watches and listens, whose every sense is wild and alive. He belonged here, as he belonged to all wild places. His quick eyes were everywhere, though the motionlessness of that little black pointer of a beard showed that there was no movement of his head.

He laughed. He put his old felt hat on the end of his stick, and held it aloft as though he were holding a trophy on the point of a spear.

He declaimed four lines of Keats' :

"As when upon a tranced summer night,
Those green-robed senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks, branch charmed by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir."

A rabbit bolted across the ride as the tramp turned west. He appeared to know the path, for when it branched he swung to the right and came down through a thicket of hollies into a narrow sandy road. There were lawns here and cattle grazing, and rabbits flashing their white scuts in the vivid sunlight. A silvery thread of smoke rose above the trees, and between the trunks a white fence and a patch of red brickwork showed where a few cottages, an inn, and a smithy lay about the cross-roads, but the man went past them with casual and uncurious glances, and then—something made him pause. On the left of the road, and close to it, two brightly painted caravans had been drawn up under the shelter of a clump of firs and hollies. A girl was sitting on the steps of one of the caravans. A swathe of white

stuff lay across her knees, and the black-and-whiteness of her had the yellow caravan for a background.

The tramp stood still in the middle of the road. The girl was looking at him, and her black eyes were as fearless as his. Her hands ceased from their sewing, and she considered him calmly, without boldness, much as one proud animal might look at another.

The tramp smiled. Beyond the caravans he could see a fire burning, and a pot and a big kettle slung upon an iron bar supported by two forked sticks. An old woman was coming across the wasteland with an apron full of dead wood, and beyond the furze bushes horses were grazing.

"Good evening to you."

The girl regarded him steadily. He had removed his hat, and she was aware of the crispness of his black hair, and of the way his head was set on his strong and defiant neck. He was dark, almost as dark as she was. He had the seal of the sun and the wind upon him.

"Going far?"

He glanced at the fire and back at her. She was thinking that he should have had little silver rings in his ears, and a red handkerchief knotted round his forehead.

"As far as a fire and a shake down in the fern."

"That's a good life."

"In summer."

"Any time. Even when it mizzles."

She dropped her eyes, put in two or three stitches, and then regarded him again with her frankly fearless eyes.

"What name?"

"Suvla John."

"That's a queer name."

"It is good enough. Turn it the other way round and make it Jack Suvla. What's yours?"

"Rachel."

"That's a good name. You're a Lee."

"How did you know?"

"Felt it. Your show was at Winchester last week."

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She nodded.
"Set up at Romsey—to-morrow. The others are there with the steam wagon. Want to cook your supper?"

"Thanks."
He unslung his canvas bag.
"I could put a piece of meat in this pot. Too late? Well—bread and cheese."

"There's enough. You sleep rough?"

"Oh, anywhere. My back's hard."
"Been a soldier?"

He showed his white teeth.
"You bet. Any cut-throat game."

They laughed, and she got off the steps of the wagon and came down. She was tall and strong, and she moved like a wild thing.

"I'll tell the old woman. The lads'll be back soon."

The sunset passed and the dusk came, and they sat round the fire, Rachel, the old woman, John Suvla, and two of the young men. Rachel was next to Suvla, and turned slightly, so that she could watch him, while he sat full square to the fire, his plate between his knees, the collar of his shirt turned back from his strong throat. He said little. He had produced a knife and fork from his canvas bag and he used them in a way that was strange to Rachel. He fed nicely and fastidiously. She was aware of the fineness of his hands.

Another caravan pulled in, and a frowsy woman and three rough fellows joined them. They talked loudly. They looked at Suvla across the fire, and the feel of him was "unked." Besides, he sat there in silence, too near to the handsome wench who observed him with dark and oblique glances. The males bristled.

Suvla lit a pipe. A big fellow came and lay down close to him with an air of menace.

"Say, cove, what's your lay?"

The match was flung into the fire, and Suvla, contemplating, watched the smoke from his pipe.

"What's yours?"

The man chewed a piece of grass and looked upward swarthily.

"Any rough game?"

"Same here. As you like."

There was silence. Then, Suvla got up and stretched himself. He did not look at the girl, nor at any of the hostile men. He was smiling.

"Grace after meat. Get up, my lad. Fair do's—and then a pow-wow."

The fellow rose, while the others remained motionless.

"Let's have a feel of you."

"Feel. Hand to hand. If you put me down I'll cut it."

They stood facing, arms raised and hands interlocked, looking into each other's eyes. There was a moment of rigidity and tension as wrists strained against wrists. Then the other fellow went down till he was kneeling at Suvla's feet.

"Christ——!"

Suvla let go, and jerked him up by the elbows, spun him round, caught him by the loins and sent him in a leap across the fire.

"No malice, my lad. Here's my place by the fire. Anybody who wants it may try for it."

He sat down and relit his pipe. The light showed his dark and defiant head. His eyes smiled. Other eyes looked at him across the fire.

The girl intervened. She had brought out a queer little pipe with a mouthpiece of amber, the bowl of it carved in the shape of a flower, and as she rose to her knees the men seemed to cower like dogs in the presence of a black leopardess.

"That's good enough. I have looked in the fire."

She turned to Suvla.

"Got a fill?"

He handed her a tin box of tobacco, and still kneeling she filled the bowl of her pipe and lit it with a piece of burning stick. Suvla had tossed the tobacco box to the men on the other side of the fire, and it was passed from one to the other till the circle was complete. The old woman had produced a

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little short clay; she sat hunched up, her head sunk between her shoulders.

Rachel resumed her place beside Suvla John, and the men noticed that the smoke from the two pipes met and mingled. Someone thrust a stick into the fire, stirring up a blaze and a tumult of sparks. The glare showed the man and the girl sitting within a foot of each other, solemn and silent.

The old woman's voice piped out.

"Been in foreign parts, boss?"

Suvla nodded.

"Tell us," came from the girl.

He drew up his knees and rested his crossed arms on them.

"It's a game—killing shoe leather and men. Now, in Russia——"

"Where's that?" asked the old woman.

"On t'other side of Germany, mother."

Rachel tossed her head.

"Let be. Tell us about Russia—John."

He began. And at first he spoke slowly, and his voice was a monotone, but as he strode deep into the river of his wanderings he became galliard, and fierce and full of mocking merriment. He coined quick and stabbing phrases. He painted pictures with bloody fingers and a burning stake. His chronicle became a world of cities and great plains and rivers, of blood and terror; of figures dimly seen struggling together, of bleak-eyed girls paddling in the snow with naked feet, of dead bodies by the roadside, of flames and the crack of rifles, of blows given in dark alleys, of escapes and hazards. And then—he took them into the sunlight and showed them the rugged and glittering strangeness of Stamboul. Next, he was in a ship. He passed near to the place where Suvla John had been born. A bloody baptism! There was a glare upon the sea. Then a tropic ocean, islands, strange flowers. He had seen China and Japan, and crossed to Mexico. Yes, there had been some fighting there, but dirty

fighting. He had completed the circle. Southampton—on a foggy morning. Passports and official guys—oh, no! A man could swim ashore and play the Willy. And they could believe just as much of it as they pleased!

The girl believed it all—but she did not say so. The men thought him a ranter, but they did not say so, and Suvla said it for them.

"A fine prize-packet of lies! Yet every word of it is gospel truth."

The cock of his head was ironical and challenging, and not one of them had the hardihood to call him a liar.

He spent the night under the yellow wagon, lying on some straw and covered by a horse cloth. Before falling asleep he had listened to the slight creaking of the woodwork above him, as Rachel moved about while she was undressing. She lay awake in her bunk, thinking, long after John Suvla had fallen asleep.

Rachel was stirring before any of the others. The sun was shining on the little window with its muslin curtains looped back with green ribbons. She could hear the splashing of water, and putting her face to the window she had a view of Suvla, stripped to the waist, bending over a bucket. The water glistened on his crisp hair and body, and she saw the ripple of the muscles under the white skin, but she saw more than that. A purplish and puckered mark showed below the right shoulder blade, the scar of an old wound.

She dressed, and leaving her black hair loose on her shoulders, she opened the door and stood on the steps of the caravan. The man was shaving, sitting on the ground, a tin mug full of water beside him, a little mirror propped upon the up-turned bucket.

"You're early."

He held his pointed beard between left finger and thumb, and his eyes remained fixed on the mirror.

"Thirty miles to-day."

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"Hard."

"You use up a lot of shoe leather."

"Better than using up your heart."

She came down the steps.

"I guess it's hard."

He gave a short laugh.

"What else! Tough! It is what the world has made it, my dear."

He began to wipe his face with a towel, and she wandered across to the fire and, finding the ashes hot, she threw fresh wood on them and worked up a blaze. She was kneeling and feeding the fire when Suvla joined her.

"You'll find a small kettle and frying pan in the wagon."

"Breakfast?"

"Suppose you wouldn't quarrel with a couple of rashers and a mug of tea?"

He was looking down at her gravely.

"No. Not if your goodwill goes with them."

"My goodwill won't fill a kettle," she said sharply; "get it."

They breakfasted together by the fire, while the other caravans remained dumb and silent. Nor did either Suvla or the girl have much to say. They watched each other, and when the meal was over he lit a pipe and began to pack his few belongings into his canvas bag.

She sat and observed him.

"Going far?"

He gave a brush to his wiry hair.

"I've told you."

"Thirty miles. What for?"

"I have got a job to do."

"Oh—a job. What sort of job?"

He looked her full in the eyes.

"Never you mind, young woman."

"Is it a job you'll be lagged for?"

Her eyes held his, and grappled the ironical defiance in them.

"Can't tell. It should be a good job, anyway. And clean."

He got up, put on his hat, and slung stick and bag over his shoulder. She—too—rose. They stood regarding each other.

"Good luck."

His eyes showed little crystals of light.

"Thanks. Romsey—is it?"

"Two days."

"And after that?"

She gave a toss of the head.

"What's worth knowing is worth finding out."

"That's so," said he. "Good-bye to you."

III

ON Hackbury Heath, high among the Scotch firs, there stands a round barrow that in June is a smother of whortleberry and bracken, and in the southern face of the barrow a little hollow bites into the sandy soil and shows the twisting roots of the firs.

John Suvla had lit a fire in this hollow and hung his kettle over it. Hackbury lies high, but Suvla's fire hid itself in the depression and under the dense fringe of the fern. He had cut fern to make himself a bed, and was lying on it, watching the evening sunlight on the tree tops while he waited for the kettle to boil.

On the still air some sound came to him from the Feldhurst Valley. It was a turret clock striking the hour, seven faint, clanging strokes, and at the sound of it the man rose quickly and, climbing out of the hollow, stood leaning against a tree. His nostrils quivered. He was most strangely moved to scorn and fierceness. He drew his breath more deeply.

"Seven! My God, seven o'clock just seven years ago!"

He rocked slightly on his heels, and the muscles showed in his throat. His fierce eyes searched the valley until they saw a little patch of redness that was a house, and when they found it they remained set in a long stare. He moistened his lips and nodded, as though approving the thought that was in him. Yes, scorn was the great thing, scorn and a defiant courage.

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But the kettle was boiling over, and he sprang down to rescue it. He made his tea and ate his bread and cheese, and then he smoked and reflected with fierce glances that were turned inward. He unbuttoned the breast pocket inside his coat, and drew out a shabby, brown leather wallet. His long fingers extracted its contents and arranged them on the top of his felt hat. A bullet, a cutting taken from some newspaper, an old photograph that had been bent in half. He looked at them intently, while his fingers unbuttoned his shirt and drew out a little leather bag attached to a loop of whipcord. Slipping the loop over his head, Suvla shook the contents of the bag into the palm of his left hand. The things glistened there, a big diamond, two superb rubies, and an emerald the size of a hazel nut. His eyes smiled at them under tense brows. He saw in these stones throbbings of some poignant memory. A woman had given them to him, a woman whose blood had made yellowish-red stains upon the snow. She had called him "Ivan." He remembered how he had kissed her when she lay dead, and how he had waited for those two men who had fired at them from that little pinewood across the stream. Yes, he had killed both those men, and had watched one of them die, with the heel of his boot crushing into the Bolshevik's mouth. He was glad.

But when the yellow sun had set, and the dusk came clinging to the great trees, Suvla sprang out of his hollow like a soldier out of a trench. He went down over Hackbury Heath, and when the heath ceased and the Feldhurst Woods began, he took to one of the woodland paths. It brought him out into a meadow above the Manor house whose turret clock had set such a clanging of memories sounding in his brain.

He climbed a field gate and crossed the meadow. The old house piled itself in the dusk, with its twisted chimneys and soaring gables.

The cedars were there as of old, sweeping the lawns with their green fingers, and in the moat the water-lilies were in flower. And Suvla stood under one of the oak trees in the little park. The smell of the place was upon him, the scent of the gardens, the old perfume of his boyhood. For a while he stood with his face in his hands. A great bitterness was upon him, but in a little while he shook it off, and his defiant head rose like the head of a swimmer.

He waited.

The moon rose.

He entered the garden and lay down under one of the cedars. Everything was very still. And then he heard a voice, a woman's voice, soft and luring as a woman's voice should be.

"Dick—come and smell the honey-suckle."

A man in evening dress came out through one of the long windows. He looked slim and boyish, and the heart of the man under the tree yearned towards him.

"Where are you, Mab?"

"Down here—by the stone seat."

To Suvla the garden was full of the presence of these two, and of the happiness of their mated voices. Yes, they were happy, happy in their quiet English fashion, and he was glad. He saw them drift across the lawn, and the man's arm was linked in the woman's. They wandered awhile and then re-entered the house.

Suvla's face wore a twisted smile.

"Six years married. That's not bad." Any woman with the soul of a louse could not help being happy with Dick. He loved this place almost better than I did. He shall keep it."

Presently, John Suvla rose and, crossing the grass very cautiously, he drew near to one of the lighted windows. A stone pillar smothered by a vine screened him, and he looked into the house of Richard Shere. A man was sitting deep in a chair, his legs crossed, reading a

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book, while a woman was settling herself at the piano. Suvla saw the flutter of her white hands as she searched for some piece of music.

The notes began to ripple, and the man laid his book aside and listened. He closed his eyes.

"Mab."

"Yes?"

"'L'Après-midi d'un Faune.'"

She played it, and in the midst of that elflike woodland music John Suvla stole away.

"Now—that other house."

His face had a grim gentleness, for the house he was leaving was the house of love, the other house would be the house of hate.

IV

At Summerhays two men were playing billiards. The blinds were down and the windows open, but one of the blinds did not reach to the sill. The eyes of John Suvla made use of this unscreened slit as he knelt on the grass walk outside the house.

The taller of the two men was in the middle of a break and very intent upon his play. A cigar was tucked between his lips. His blue eyes stared. He was considered to be a handsome man, and so he was, in a florid, heavy style, but his was the overbearing face of a man with an evil temper. His sandy hair, carefully plastered, betrayed an incipient thinness. His nose, shaped like a parrot's beak, was coarse and thick, and at the heavy root of it three furrows bit deep into the red and shiny forehead.

"Good shooting, Blaber! You're in form."

The player frowned.

"Do you mind not talking. It puts me off."

"Does it? I shouldn't have thought anything ever put you off."

The other man was mild and bald. He had protuberant eyes, a colourless and drooping moustache, and a chin that receded. His expression

was that of a nice person politely, suppressing a hiccough.

Suvla did not look at him. His eyes were on the other man, Robert Blaber, Esquire, of Summerhays, and they followed the big man's every movement and took in every detail of him. They observed the cunning beast behind the bland arrogance of his self-indulgent face; they noted his incipient fatness, the coarsening of his skin, the slight muddiness of his blue eyes, those sinister lines about nose and mouth.

"Flabby. You have grown flabby, Bob Blaber."

Blaber missed a cannon, and the mild man gave a little chuckle.

"You have let me in."

He was examining the situation, and he did not see the look of scorn that Blaber gave him, but Suvla saw it, and bristled.

"Scorn! You! What right have you to feel scorn? By God—I guess I'll take that from you."

He slipped away and found himself outside another window, but this window was dark. A lattice had been left open, and Suvla leaned through it to find that Robert Blaber's writing desk stood where it had always stood, just under the window. He took a slip of paper from his pocket and, feeling the surface of the desk, found something heavy, a war relic, the fuse of a shell. His lips curled. He sneered as he slipped the piece of paper under the improvised letter-weight. Someone would find it there in the morning.

But John Suvla's curiosity was not satisfied. Back in the deep darkness of a spreading lime tree he stood and looked through yet another window into a room where a woman was writing letters. And the heart of him was astonished. He had come here to look upon a lost romance, and upon a girl whose mouth had been for him the mouth of tragedy. He remembered the liquid darkness of her eyes, her tempestuous hair, her enthusiasms, her

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irresponsible energy. But now he saw her as Mrs. Alice Blaber, a woman with a hard mouth, her eyes hidden behind huge tortoiseshell-rimmed spectacles. The announcement of her marriage, picked out of an old English paper somewhere in the East, had shocked and astonished him. That Alice—his Alice—had been able to mate with that great prancing stallion! Yet, as he looked at her his astonishment and the tremblings of an old tenderness and pity died away. She was hard, all ebony and bone. She frowned. Her mouth looked bloodless, a hard and unlovely line.

She pressed an electric bell that was connected to her writing-table. She was closing a letter. Her stamp-box was empty, and the fact seemed to annoy her.

A servant came into the room.

"Bates, how is it that my stamps always disappear?"

"I don't know—I'm sure—m'am. I think the master——"

"Get me a stamp from somewhere and take this to the post."

"Now—m'am?"

"At once."

Suvla drew away into the deeper shadows. There was none of the old voice left, the voice of the girl whom he had loved. She—too—had a tongue that was tipped with scorn. What right had she to scorn?

V

SUVLA slept among the pines of Hackbury, but he was awake before sunrise and brushing the dew from the bracken two hours before other folk were stirring. He made for Feldhurst, leaving his kit on Hackbury, and when the sun cleared the woods above Feldhurst village, Suvla was using his knife on one of the windows of the church. It was an old leaded casement in the chancel, very near to the ground, and by removing one of the glass panes he was able to get at the catch and open the lattice.

He climbed in. The sun struck the east window and threw patches of colour on the floor. The silence of the place was unbroken, and it had its effect upon him, for he moved softly, bareheaded, the defiant note subdued. The Sheres had a private pew here panelled off at the chancel end of the south aisle, and it was towards this pew that John Suvla went. He opened the door, stood a moment, and then sat down in the corner that had been his so many years ago. Two letters had been cut into the oak panelling, "J. S." He could remember cutting them with a knife one Christmas time during a particularly heavy sermon. He passed his fingers over the letters and seemed to dream, until a brightness on the wall attracted his attention. He stood up and examined the brass plate.

"To the memory of John Shere—Captain in the 3rd East Regiment—who was killed at Suvla on the night of the evacuation in December, 1915.

"He lies in a strange land, but he lives in the hearts of those who knew him."

A smile passed over Suvla's face, quick and elusive. He bowed his head for a moment.

"Does anyone remember?" he asked himself. "Does anyone wish to remember?"

He left the church as he had entered it, and, avoiding Feldhurst village, struck back through the woods till he reached the Fest river. There was a pool here where willows trailed in the water, and it was in this pool that Suvla had learnt to swim. He stripped off his clothes now and plunged and splashed like a boy, and coming out ran to and fro on the grassy bank until the body of him was dry. In twenty minutes he was back on Hackbury and lighting his fire. He ate his bacon and bread and drank his tea, and with a pipe in his mouth he set about his toilet. His canvas bag disgorged certain articles. He did not shave, but

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rubbed some of the ash from the fire over his cheeks and chin to emphasize their slovenliness. A black shade fastened by a piece of elastic covered his left eye. He knotted a dirty handkerchief round his throat, and surveyed himself in the little mirror. Yes, he looked as dirty a blackguard as the tramping world could show.

Meanwhile, at Summerhays, Robert Blaber was sitting down at his desk to write a letter. He had picked up a pen and taken a sheet of notepaper from a drawer when his glance fell upon that white slip held in position by the shell fuse. He removed the weight and picked up the slip of paper. It was faded and dirty, and the edges were frayed.

"Blaber—Langdale. On the 15th inst., at the church of St. Joseph, Feldhurst, Robert Blaber to Alice Langdale, daughter of the late James Langdale, of Beech House, Feldhurst."

Below this announcement someone had scribbled four words: "Death brought them together."

Blaber went red. The creases deepened on his forehead. He pushed his chair back, hesitated, scrutinizing the slip of paper held between his finger and thumb. Then his anger possessed him. He blustered into the dining-room where his wife was still at breakfast, with the morning paper propped against the coffee-pot.

"Did you put this damned thing on my desk?"

She remained perfectly cold. The glance she gave him suggested that she had grown accustomed to his tantrums and despised them. She had more money than he had, and a far more blighting tongue.

"What thing?"

He held out the slip of paper, his eyes suspicious and threatening.

"No. What is it? Has someone been saying rude things about your speech at Billingdown?"

He crumpled the piece of paper into his palm.

"I suppose there is something subtle in all this."

She made a movement of the shoulders.

"I don't know what you mean. What is it?"

He turned towards the door, for already her eyes had reverted to the newspaper. She was an adept at proving to him that he bored her.

"Oh—nothing. But I'll find out. I suppose some damned——"

"Don't slam the door, please."

He went out and stood in the hall, holding the crumpled piece of paper in the palm of his hand and staring at it. His hard eyes were smeared with a streak of fear.

About eleven that morning a very slovenly-looking tramp appeared in Feldhurst village, walking clumsily and helping himself along with an ash stick cut from a hedgerow. His face was dirty, his hat pulled down over his eyes. He had a spiritless, broken air; he stooped; his eyes were fixed on the ground as though he had lost sixpence a year ago and was still looking for it.

The tramp sat down under one of the chestnut trees on Feldhurst green. Directly opposite him a man was leaning over a gate, and nothing but the roadway lay between them.

The tramp spoke to the man at the gate.

"Any jobs goin' round 'ere, guv'ner?"

The man at the gate—his name was Soames and he kept the Green Man inn—regarded the tramp sceptically.

"Want a job?"

"I'm askin' you."

"Not the sort of job for you, William."

"Think I don't want work?"

"You don't look like it."

"I've got a thirst on me—anyhow."

Mr. Soames pointed in the direction of the Feldhurst pump.

"Free drinks there—if you provide your own mug."

He retreated from the gate, and

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the tramp, after an interval of sulky meditation, gathered himself and went on towards the Wheat Sheaf at the upper angle of the green. The Wheat Sheaf had always been the more democratic of the two pubs, and it was still kept by a little round man who had known Feldhurst for twenty years.

The tramp entered the bar.

"Arf a pint of bitter, guv'nor."

He put down a shilling, was examined by a pair of shrewd eyes in a shiny face, and received his beer and his change. There were two or three other men in the bar, a groom, a gardener who was out of work, and the driver of a steam lorry that was drawn up outside. The tramp took his mug to a table in the far corner, produced a crumpled newspaper and appeared to read.

But he listened. The three men were gossiping, and it would seem that the groom had a grievance. He had been sacked from Summerhays three days ago.

"I tell you I gave 'em a bit of lip. Couldn't help it. The blighter! He's a born bully, he is. He don't know how to treat a man decent. 'I'm not a dog,' I says, 'and don't you forget it.' He ups with his stick. 'You touch me,' I says, 'and I'll have the law of you. You ain't no gent and you never will be.'"

"That's a fact," said the gardener.

"Now, young Dick Shere—"

"Ah, 'e's a good sort, a little gentleman."

"And so was his brother as was killed in the war. Pity it wasn't Blaber."

"Sure. Fancy a fellow like Blaber putting up for Parliament!"

"He likes 'is boots big."

"What I says is, it be'nt right or fair that he should run this 'ere village. 'E comes around and bosses the lot of us, parson, doctor, schoolmaster. They be scared of him. Squire Blaber! Now what I says is, we don't want no squire,

but if there's got to be a squire— Dick Shere's the gentleman."

"Sure. But 'e's too easy tempered; lets Blaber tread on his toes."

"That's so. If Master Jack had been alive, Blaber wouldn't have grown so big."

The tramp, having finished the drinking of his beer, folded up his newspaper, rose and stood in the middle of the room.

"Say, mates, any work goin' round 'ere?"

The groom laughed.

"Mr. Blaber's wanting a groom. You can try it."

"Don't know anythink about 'osses. No gardenin' jobs?"

"What—with me out of work?" asked the gardener. "That ain't sense."

Suvla limped out into the sunlight and went slowly down the hill towards the church. Two of the men in that stuffy little room with its smell of stale ale and tobacco and its dusted floor, had known him as well as they had known his brother, yet there had been no glimmer of recognition in their eyes. John Shere was dead, and Robert Blaber stood in his shoes.

VI

SUVLA threw up his head and laughed. Before him he saw the green gates of Summerhays and the brick gate-pillars with their grey stone balls. A neat square of mown grass lay spread on either side of the entrance, marked off from the road by white posts and black chains. In the centre of each grass plot stood a yew tree clipped into the shape of a square column with a green ball on the top of it.

Suvla stepped over the chains and sat down in the shadow of one of the yews. He pulled out his paper and an old clay pipe, and prepared himself for a possible adventure.

He waited for half an hour, and then a voice admonished him.

By Warwick Deeping

"If I was you, mate, I'd get off that there bit o' grass."

A hairy face and a birch-broom showed between the leaves of the gate.

"Wa' for? I ain't doin' no harm."

"It ben't the harm you're doing. But if—he—catches yer——"

"This ain't 'is property, whoever 'e be. It's part of the public 'ighway."

"Well, don't say as I didn't warn you, mate. He'll be down here on his horse—any minute."

"I'll ask 'im to lend me a tanner!"

It was this derelict figure that Blaber saw as he rode out of his gate, a scrubby figure impertinently lounging within the sacred area of the posts and chains, newspaper spread, clay pipe tucked into the corner of a vagrant mouth. Blaber pulled up his horse.

"Get off that grass."

He was peremptory, high in the saddle, and a slow eye looked up at him from under the brim of a hat. The clay pipe was removed.

"Beg pardin, guv'nor?"

"Get off that grass."

"Beg pardin, I'm a bit deaf, mister. Got one ear lost in the great war."

Blaber called to the man who was sweeping the drive.

"Banks."

"Sir?"

"Turn this fellow off the grass. He says he's deaf."

The man looked frightened. He came and leant over the chains, his broom trailing in one hand.

"Move on, matey. That's private."

The tramp had been deaf to the master, but he appeared to hear the man. With some deliberation he folded up his dirty paper, stuffed it into his pocket, arose, lifted a clumsy leg over the chain, and stood scratching the back of his neck.

"Didn't mean no harm, mister. Give us a bob. I'm a ex-soldier, I am."

Blaber looked down at him with infinite scorn.

"You look like it! Every black-guard in the country spins that yarn. Clear out!"

He rode on, turning in the saddle to see that the fellow obeyed him. The derelict figure was slouching down the road, its shoulders and shambling feet suggesting a cringing sulkiness. Blaber saw him blow his nose on his fingers, and rub them against his ragged coat.

"Low beast! What are we to do with such useless brutes? A pity we have lost the whipping post and the village stocks."

But the heart of John Suvla was full of laughter and of exultation. He had come to judge, to hold a man's vengeance in the hollow of his hand, and he knew that his scorn was good and right.

VII

YET John Suvla wished to be sure.

Often, in those moments of his foreseeing, a figure had come between him and the inevitableness of his revenge. It had held out hands of protest and of appeal, pleading for the life of a second happiness in recompense for the loss of the first. For Suvla knew that if Alice Langdale loved the man, and was still the Alice Langdale he remembered, his very scorn of scorn might have made him pass on in silence and take the wild road of a wild man's life. He had felt no bitterness against the woman. He did not fight with women. He did not ask to return to the old world of tame comfort and security. Always, he had had the restless spirit of the wanderer, of the man who hunted adventure wherever it was to be found.

Were there children at Summerhays?

Would it matter to anyone if Blaber lay with his red face in the mud?

Suvla pondered it out under the

Suvla John

firs of Hackbury as he watched the branches swaying against the blue of the sky. He wanted to be sure. But how to be sure? That was the problem.

True, nor was it the whole of the problem, for he discovered in himself a great yearning towards the master of Feldhurst Manor, and this yearning clashed with his fiercer motives. He had come to this green corner of England to strike a blow and to disappear; John Shere was dead and would remain dead, for it is inconvenient for dead men to come to life. He wanted to speak with his brother, and he was afraid to speak with him. He knew Dick too well, the sensitive, generous Dick who loved Feldhurst Manor and who had come to think of it as his. Might not even a generous man hate a dead brother who returned, and an elder brother? Suvla feared this hatred. It would be bitter, very bitter.

Yet the very bitterness of it challenged him. The real, vital chivalry was so rare, and in that brother of his it had shone clear and bright.

Was Richard Shere the Richard Shere of yesterday? Had marriage, children, possessions changed him? How would he react to the shock of a resurrected past? Would he put self first, the self that cries, "What does this mean to me?"

Suvla rose up and stood looking towards the red house in the valley.

"I'll do it," he said. "Has not life taught me to take it by the throat?"

With the dusk he set out, but first he made his way to that other house, for he had another message to deliver. He slipped over the garden wall and pushed through the shrubberies.

The Blabers had finished dinner, for the windows of the dining-room were dark, but the window of the billiard room showed as a yellow oblong. There were lights too in the drawing-room. Alice Blaber would be there, while her husband knocked the billiard balls about with arro-

gant precision. It was that other window that interested John Suvla, and as he moved cautiously across the lawn, avoiding the stop-netting of the tennis court, he threw quick glances right and left. On these summer evenings people might stroll out into the cool darkness.

The library window was open, and Suvla insinuated an arm and shoulder. He felt for Blaber's desk, and placed something upon it in the centre of a sheet of note-paper, and drawing quickly back, stood for a moment flattened against the wall of the house. He had heard a sound of voices, but they came from the billiard-room.

"I had better give you fifty, Lowndes, just to make a game of it."

There was the sharp click of the balls to reassure the listener. He bent double, ran like an ape along the grass path, and remained crouching by the window of the drawing-room. He could hear the rustling of paper. He raised his eyes above the sill of the window and looked into the room.

Alice Blaber was seated on the sofa within two yards of him. Her back was turned, but the alert poise of her head suggested that some sound had disturbed her, and Suvla crouched and slid slowly back along the wall.

He heard a paper thrown on the floor. She had risen and was standing at the window, for he could see her shadow on the grass. He remained motionless, head lowered, so that his hat should hide the whiteness of his face.

Alice Blaber leaned out into the night.

"Alec——!"

Her voice was a mere whisper, but the stealthy intimacy of it stirred a shiver in Suvla's blood. He had had no more than a moment's glimpse of her, but he had grown wise in the ways of women. She had discarded those owl spectacles; she had taken trouble with her dress and with her hair. And though he remained crouching

with head bowed down, part of the shaggy smother of the ivy, he could picture her standing there with a secret shine in her eyes, a woman who had a lover.

Again—he heard her voice, and it betrayed more boldness.

“Alec—”

Her eyes were looking straight out into the darkness, and from somewhere came a faint metallic sound like the rattling of a bunch of keys. Her shadow disappeared. He heard a movement in the room, and realized that she was coming out into the garden, and that he was not the only man in the garden of Summerhays. There was nothing for it but another ape-like glide on hands and feet along the darkness of the wall and below the level of the lighted windows. He did it, hearing the click of the billiard balls as he passed under the billiard-room window. An ironical sound! Treachery had begotten treachery. While Blaber amused himself with some friendly “rabbit,” his wife was meeting a lover in the garden.

Suvla made his escape into the Summerhays orchard and dropped over the fence into a lane. He looked fierce. Crawling came amiss to him, and he felt that he had done enough of it, and as he turned in the direction of Feldhurst Manor his galliard recklessness came back. “No more monkey’s tricks!” And then his fierceness dwindled. He paused, and stood leaning over a field gate and contemplated the irony of life and the strange interplay of its forces. Was there a rough justice in the way things happened? Was his scorn wasted on Robert Blaber?

He began to wonder. That house down yonder filled him with a feeling of sadness and of disgust. He was sorry for the woman, and almost he was sorry for the man.

“Poor, greedy, treacherous devil.”

He looked at the stars, and his thoughts went forward to meet his brother. Would Dick stand the test? He wondered.

AN empty motor-car—a doctor’s car—was standing with lights burning outside Feldhurst Rectory, and Suvla made use of the lights of the car to scribble a letter in pencil on the leaf of a twopenny note-book. He tore out the page, folded it, and wrote on the outside “For Mister Shere.”

The Manor garden welcomed him. He entered it by way of the orchard gate, and keeping to the grass verges of the borders he came to the great lawn and the cedars. The moon had not yet risen, and Suvla lay down under one of the cedars.

He could hear voices, and presently the sound of music came to him, a piece of Debussy’s, impersonal, plaintive, mysterious. He listened. Dick’s wife had an understanding of such music, and a most delicate touch, and as Suvla listened a great peace stole over him, for the music was not of the world of the flesh. It excluded all hate and strife and passion and all the little fleshly frettings, and it spoke to this wild man of the things he knew. It was moonlight upon forests and the twittering of birds in the dawn. His soul seemed to expand. He felt that life was good here where such music was made, unlike that other house of hate and intrigue and disillusionment. And Suvla was lifted up, above the fierceness of his own scorn, above the recoil of a man’s retaliation. The music moved him to change his plan.

Presently it ceased, and Suvla rose from under the tree and walked slowly across the grass towards the lighted window. He walked very proudly, with his head held high. The blinds and curtains were undrawn, and he could see Dick’s wife gathering up her music, and Dick himself with a book on his knees, filling a last pipe. Suvla drew near.

“I am going to bed, Dick.”

“All right, girl. I ought to answer that letter of Jessop’s.”

Suvla John

"What time is it?"

"Just on ten o'clock."

She went out of the room, and Richard Shere was left alone on the sofa close to the open window. He stood up; he was in the act of lighting his pipe when the great test came.

"Dick."

Richard Shere's head went up, and for one moment he remained absolutely still, the burning match held between finger and thumb. He made a quick movement towards the window.

"Who's that?"

"Dick, have you forgotten my voice?"

Young Shere looked bewildered.

"Good God!"

A figure moved into the light.

"It is all right, lad; I'm alive. But don't let her hear. How many years is it? Seven? It is a long time to be thought dead. But I wanted to look in you for a moment; I'm glad I came. It is good to see people happy."

"Jack, old man; am I dreaming?"

"No. I was not killed that night, and yet I'm dead, dead as John Shere. Don't worry about that, lad. She—must not know. And—now—I'm off again. God bless you both."

The figure moved away, but Dick Shere was at the window.

"Jack! Good God—man, don't go! Why—"

He was out of the window and running after that other figure that showed up in the light of the rising moon.

"Jack—for God's sake—! Why—my dear old chap—"

Richard Shere caught Suvla at the end of the paved walk where the trellised gate opened into the orchard. There was a slight struggle between them, but Shere kept his hold on Suvla's arms, and Suvla ceased to resist him. He leaned against the closed gate, and the moonlight came through and made a whiteness about his face.

He felt his brother trembling.

"It's you, Jack. I thought it was your ghost. It's really you?"

Suvla's hands held the other's shoulders.

"Dick, my lad, I think I love you a little—I wanted to see how life was treating you. And now—you will let me go."

"Go? My dear old chap—why, of course you are not going."

"I am."

"Nonsense. After all these years? And you have never seen Mab and the children. Besides, the place is yours—"

Suvla's hands gripped his brother's shoulders.

"Man, I believe you are glad to see me, in spite of everything."

"What the devil do you mean? Of course you may want us to turn out, but if you think I grudge you that—"

Suddenly his head was caught in the circle of two powerful arms. He was held as his big brother had once held him on the night when their mother died.

"Dick, you great man. Do you remember that night when you blubbed on my shoulder? You do. And now—it seems—I have got a lot to tell you. But first of all—I'm dead."

He held young Shere at arm's length.

"Silence. You have got to understand. John Shere is dead, not because any shame keeps him dead, but because he wishes to be dead. I'm a wild man, Dick. I have been knocking about the world like a sort of wandering Jew. It's my life, and I love it. I could not lie in the same bed each night and wake up in the same bed each morning. That's the truth. My name is John Suvla. And sometimes I am a tramp, sometimes a soldier; any old wild game gets me by the heart. So, that's that. Now what about that little wife of yours?"

"She has gone to bed."

"Do you think that she heard us?"

"We use the blue room, Jack."

By Warwick Deeping

"Oh, over on the other side. That's good. I have not done with you yet. What about going to the old moat house?"

Young Shere's face was still bewildered and protesting.

"But, old man, you are going to sleep here?"

"Not a bit of it. My bed's up on Hackbury; good bracken. Will you be able to spin some yarn to Mab if I keep you up till midnight?"

"I shall tell her the truth. We have no secrets."

"Can she keep a secret?"

"She can keep mine."

"Well, we'll see."

They went with linked arms to the old brick moat house at the end of the terrace above the moat. Two garden chairs stood one on each side of the oak table, and Suvla touched the table with his hands.

"Same as ever. You are a bit of oak, Dick. Now, I want you to tell me something."

His voice was casual. He had brought out his pipe and tobacco.

"What did Bob Blaber tell people about that night of the evacuation—when I got potted?"

Shere was watching his brother's hands.

"Oh, his account was that just before the hour to clear you and he were standing alone in a traverse, and that—for a joke—you climbed on the parapet and took off your cap to the Turks."

"That's true. I did. Well?"

"And that a chance bullet got you right in the chest. He swore you were dead."

"He thought I was done for?"

"Yes."

"He ought to have been sure. For, you see, Dick my lad, it was Blaber who potted me."

IX

YOUNG SHERE was standing in the moonlight, a very tense figure, while Suvla leaned against one of the white pillars of the doorway.

"I can't believe it, Jack. What I

mean is—that a man should be such a skunk——"

"Well, it was his chance, my lad. There were we all alone together, waiting to round up the last of the men and make a bolt for the beach. I can't say that we ever loved each other, and Blaber wanted Alice."

"Damn him! And they are both as miserable——! But how did he shoot you?"

"I had climbed on the parapet, and I happened to turn round rather suddenly, and there was Blaber with his revolver out. No, it wasn't an accident. Well, the old Turks picked me up, and a little German doctor man cut me about. He presented me with the bullet. I left it in Blaber's desk about an hour ago."

"You have seen him?"

"Yes, but he has not seen John Shere. I thought that bullet might give him furiously to think."

"But, Jack, the Turks never reported."

"No. I gave another name."

"And after that?"

"I was a prisoner. I escaped and got into Russia. Cutting the throats of the Bolshies! I was with Denikin, and after Denikin I was with Wrangel. Then a voyage or two, the South Seas, Japan. Crossed to Mexico and found some fighting. Oh, it's a great life."

He laughed, but his brother did not laugh with him.

"What about Blaber? You will expose him?"

"Why should I?"

"Good heavens, if you don't—I shall."

"Jack, my lad, this is my pigeon. A little while ago I was rather small and savage. I used to spend my time thinking what I would do to the blackguard, but now I ask myself: Is it worth it? One can kick a man harder—by not kicking him—that is by kicking his soul. I shall do that to Blaber."

He was immovable, and Dick Shere's appeals beat like birds at a window.

Suvla John

"But—you must, Jack."

"I won't. Let it alone, lad. Tell me about Alice."

"I never did like Alice, and I suppose I can't be fair to her. She's hard."

"She's hard, Dick, because she's unhappy. I guess they are having a pretty rotten life together. And now she has a lover."

"How do you know?"

"Do—you—know, Dick? She calls him Alec. Who is Alec?"

Young Shere gave a quick jerk of the head.

"I thought so. An artist fellow who has a cottage down here. God help him."

"God help them both, my lad. If they love each other, what does it matter?"

"Then you don't care?"

"Care? I haven't a care in the world."

Nor had he, and yet Suvla found it very difficult to persuade his brother that the life he was leading was the life he wished to lead.

The turret clock struck midnight, and Suvla reminded Dick that his little wife would be puzzling over the amazing length of a letter to—one named Jessop.

"You can hunt me up on the heath to-morrow. You know the old burrow among the firs."

They parted at the bridge over the moat, Suvla big, galliard, and tender; young Shere troubled and utterly dissatisfied with the way things were tending.

"I believe you are sacrificing yourself, Jack."

"Man, how am I to get that idea out of your generous head? Go to bed."

"I shall have to tell Mab."

"Perhaps she will understand me better than you do. Good night, lad. What time will you be up to-morrow?"

"Oh—early."

"So much the better."

John Suvla marched back to Hackbury by the light of the moon, and the heart of him was happy, for the

man whom he had loved had come scatheless through the ordeal. Honour and chivalry and the exultation of a generous impulse were still alight in a world where men cling to material things, and snarl at each other over a golden bone."

"By God! it was worth it," said John Suvla. "It is better to find a great heart than to dig up a crock full of gold."

He slept on his bed of bracken, but there were other people who did not sleep, for at Summerhays a man—going by chance to his writing-table—had seen a little pointed pillar of lead set up on a sheet of writing-paper. The bullet had a minute label attached to it by a piece of red wool, and on the label was written: "Fired at John Shere on the night of the evacuation of Suvla Bay."

X

BLABER sat heavily in a chair, holding the revolver bullet in the palm of his hand.

Fear may bring a yearning for comradeship, and Robert Blaber was afraid, and in his sudden need of a comrade he discovered his own loneliness. There was not a soul to whom he could go and pour out some savage plea of justification; no one to whom he could tell a lie; no one who cared.

For years he had cultivated arrogance, and by means of it he had built a defence between himself and a memory, and now the stomach of his arrogance was empty. Someone knew. And who was that someone, his unseen enemy?

He went out and wandered about the garden, and he was savagely afraid. He looked at the dark windows of his house, and they seemed to him cold and unfriendly. Behind one of those windows his wife was sleeping, and suddenly he was astonished by the thought of her hatred. For hate him she did; he had known it a long while, and had

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By Warwick Deeping

met it with cynicism and a frank indulgence in other adventures.

But what right had she to hate him? Had he not done this thing for her? And supposing she had known the truth, might she not have loved him better? Women were queer. The truth! Supposing she did know it, and had placed that accusing relic on his table? But how could she know? It was impossible.

His mood changed. This man of cynical self-indulgence began to pity himself. He became full of savage whimperings and of loud self-justification. The war had been a wild game in which enemies had sometimes used their bullets upon each other instead of upon the obvious enemy. Grudges worked off. Was it not just as likely that John Shere had had it in his mind to shoot Bob Blaber as Blaber had thought of shooting Shere? They had hated each other. The justification was there to be seized upon and enlarged until it became a bold and self-convincing lie. He remembered that on that night Shere had pulled out his revolver and examined it, yes, just at that place where someone had stuck up a wooden cross at the back of the trench. What had been in Shere's mind? Some fierce and deadly thought? Had he not the right to infer it, and to assert it with savage confidence? "I got my shot in first. I knew what he meant to do."

A rush of energy came to Blaber. He had no very clear idea of what was working in his mind, for he was rather like a scared animal whose impulse is to charge blindly and use its horns. He entered the house and went with heavy swiftness up the stairs. A light was burning on the landing. He paused, hesitating, outside the door of his wife's room.

"Should he dare it?"

Then, the violent nature of the man pushed him on. He knocked at the door, and waited.

"Alice."

No one answered.

He knocked again and called to her more boldly.

"Alice! Are you asleep?"

Still no answer. He grasped the handle, turned it and found that the door was unlocked. He pushed it open and entered the dark room.

"Alice!"

Next moment he was fumbling for his matches. He struck one and held the flame at the level of his shoulder. It showed him that the room was empty; the bed had not been used.

Trembling a little he lit the gas, and by the time he had lit it the flame of the match was scorching his fingers. With a petulant curse he threw it on the floor, and stood looking round his wife's room. It was perfectly neat and in order, and as his glance travelled over her dressing-table he saw something white propped against the mirror.

A letter. He went near and saw that the envelope was addressed to him. "Robert."

He tore it open and read.

"ROBERT,—I have gone away with Alec Grant. I could not bear the life with you any longer. If John Shere had lived things might have been different for me. But there it is.—ALICE."

XI

RICHARD SHERE was late, and when he came wending through the bracken to where the tumulus swelled amid the firs he saw his brother sitting amid the roots of an old tree like some captain of outlaws. Suvla had shaved himself and put on a clean shirt and a soft, white collar, and somehow his worn clothes did not matter. Shere hardly saw them. The living, dominating reality was his brother's face.

"Jack—I'm late; I'm sorry."

He had been hurrying, and there was a look of haste in his eyes. Moreover, he brought with him an immense yet boyish seriousness, and as he sat down in the fern beside his brother he laid a dramatic hand on Suvla's knee.

(Continued on page 711)

By Warwick Deeping

"Someone came to see me. Extraordinary. Life's very queer."

"Who was it?"

"Blaber."

"Blaber!"

"Red-eyed and jumpy and talkative, like men got in the war when they had the fear of death on them. I believe that half the time he did not know what he was saying."

Suvla looked grim.

"Why—he should have come to me! Your brother."

"That may have been the reason. What did he say?"

"Jack, Alice has left him. She went off last night with that chap Grant."

"He told you that?"

"Yes; extraordinary—but he did. He tried to make a laugh of it—but such laughter—damnable laughter. And all the while I felt that he was trying to tell me something, or find out something. A horrible, frightened slyness."

"You told him nothing?"

"Nothing. He went away with a sort of doomed look about him. It made me marvel—for if ever a man was arrogant and tough—"

Suvla was filling his pipe.

"Not tough, Dick, only damnably selfish. And Blaber's arrogance is the shell of a secret cowardice. It cracks. I've seen it crack before. A handsome, fleshy man who made the women exclaim: 'What a splendid soldier Bob Blaber must be.' He wasn't. He was yellow. Some little screw of a cockney was worth three of him."

Suvla lit his pipe. He was aware of his brother's troubled face, for Dick had always taken things to heart, and the sensitive conscience of him was not easily satisfied.

"Jack, old man, I told Mab."

"About the wild man?"

"She agrees with me. We could not be happy, living there and taking all that is yours, while you—"

He hesitated with his eyes on the knees of his brother's trousers, and Suvla saw the look, and his eyes filled with tenderness and laughter.

"While I go about like a scarecrow! My lad, I am not so poor as I look. Because a man has a patched pair of breeches it does not mean that he has a patched soul. At the moment I happen to be a tramp, while to-morrow I may be a major in some absurd little army."

"But the Manor is yours, and the farms, the very money. My dear old man, I can't—"

"That's soon settled. I think it ought to be settled. I'll execute a deed of gift, or whatever they call it."

"Jack, you don't understand. I can't take everything."

"Why not?"

"Well, if you were in my place—"

"It hurts you. It would hurt most men in a different way. I'll think it over."

"It is no use thinking it over. Besides, Mab is coming up to see you."

Suvla gave a quick lift of the head.

"Mab!"

"She wants to see you alone."

Suvla sat faintly smiling, while his brother got up and stood looking down into the Feldhurst valley.

"What about Blaber?" he asked.

"I am going to reflect upon Blaber. Probably I shall see him."

"Be careful, Jack. That fellow's eyes—"

"Don't worry, my lad. Blaber won't touch me. Perhaps to-night."

When his brother had gone John Suvla rested his head against the tree-trunk and dreamed. The world was a great world when the heart of it was sound, and men could look into each other's eyes without fear and without reproach. Yes, that was one of the secrets of life, to be able to scorn one's own scorn, and to suffer the high-horse of pride to prance gallantly. Life was a fine and careless gesture. Sometimes it may be necessary for a brave man to be cruel; but only the coward is mean.

He waited. Dick's wife was com-

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ing, and already his homage was hers, for her hands made music, and she had made music of Dick's life; and when she came, a little bronze-haired woman with serious dark eyes, he was on his feet like the great gentleman that he was, smiling down at her as she stood knee-deep in the bracken.

"John," she said softly, "I'm so glad——"

Her eyes searched him with immense seriousness, and then they answered his smile.

"Yes, I am glad. At first, I'll confess, it was rather a shock to me."

He held out his hand like a courtier.

"Mab, please sit down. And so, I suppose you have come to try and persuade me to take away from you the things you love?"

She sat down in the bracken like a thoughtful and serious child.

"It is all yours."

"I'm glad. Because——"

Her eyes met his.

"Because that means that I can give it all to you and Dick. Some things make one happy."

But she had much to say in answer to that.

"You don't know your Dick."

"I know him a little, but perhaps not so well as you do. Almost absurdly, honourable."

"I don't think it absurd. I love him for it."

"Right, quite right."

"Do you know what he did with his war gratuity, John?"

"I can imagine."

"He gave it to one of the ruined French villages, because he felt that he ought not to have made any money out of the war. And do you think he will be happy?"

Suvla smiled at the horizon.

"Wait; you are all for Dick and yet all for both of us. Let me show you what sort of man I am. I am a wild man, Mab. I hate quiet corners and armchairs, and all the comfortable things most people love. Life is the thing for me—the life of the sea and the desert and the

road. Danger and change are my dinner. I was always like that, and the war and the after-the-war made me more so. Ishmael. And so, I ask you, what is Feldhurst Manor to me save a dear memory, and a place where two dear people are happy? Can't you understand that?"

"Yes," she said, with her chin on her knees; "yes, but it won't leave Dick quite happy. Won't you meet him half-way, keep some of the farms, or take some of the money?"

Suvla felt in his pocket.

"Yes, perhaps I will. What about Ash Farm? I'll agree to keep Ash Farm and have the rent sent me—when and where I want it."

Her eyes lit up.

"But that's so little."

"Wait; I have not finished. That's for Dick and me; and now for you. I have a lot of silly little stones here; I am going to present you with one of them. You can call it Uncle John's heirloom for the children—the eldest girl."

He tossed a diamond up and down in the palm of his hand.

"Yes; it's a clean stone, and I think it brings good luck. No; and it is not my last. My dear, you will do me the honour of taking it."

He stood up and bent over her, and she looked at the precious stone in his hand.

"But, my dear John, it must be worth——"

"Of course it is. Do you think I would present Dick's wife with something cheap and nasty? It is about your quality, Mab, and it is what Dick got when he married you."

She looked up at him with a quick laugh.

"John, you ought to have been a knight in the old days. Yes, I'll take it. I shall value it. I think I shall call it the 'Bayard Stone.'"

"My dear, I am not a bit of a Bayard."

She held the diamond in her palm.

"Perhaps it is because you don't think so, that you are."

(Continued on page 715)

XII

SUVLA walked back with Dick Shere's wife as far as the edge of Hackbury Heath, and here he turned, after opening the field gate for her into Hackbury Lane. His eyes regarded her with smiling benevolence, as though life were a great jest.

"My country ends here."

"But you must come to us."

"In these clothes?"

Her eyes refused to be shocked by his clothes.

"Dick can lend you some clothes. Besides, does it matter?"

"You are very kind to my eccentricities, Mab. May I come down after dinner to-night? And if so—will you play to me?"

"Yes. But I want you to see the children. You must enter the old house."

"I will. I think it will be good for me. Tell Dick about Ash Farm."

His face regained some of its sternness, for as he climbed back to Hackbury Hill his thoughts reverted to Summerhays and Robert Blaber. How ironical was the name of that house! Summerhays! An empty house, childless, full of memories of hatred and disillusionment, given over to servants; a house of fear! And what was Blaber doing? What were his thoughts? Would he meet the rude justice that had fallen upon him with hardihood and defiance, or would he snivel and sneak away to the shamed man's refuge, women and strong drink?

He lay down among his fir trees under the June sun, and the greatness of pity stirred in him. Did he need revenge; did he thirst for it; was the soul of him so small and greedy? Was not life good, and could he better it by putting his foot on the throat of a poor arrogant devil who had won nothing but hatred? Yes, it was bad to be hated, not by the crowd, but by the people who mattered, by the woman who should have been your com-

rade through life. What had Bob Blaber to cling to now that his arrogance had been pricked? Nothing but the flesh and the grosser things of the flesh. Unless—!

John Suvla got up and wandered among the trees. He smelt the sweet pungent smell of them, and felt the warm sunlight on his face and hands. Yes, life was good, but did not much of its goodness depend upon the living of it? And the heart of him was softened. "I came to curse," he thought, "and maybe I shall stay to bless."

He entered the Manor garden in the clear of the evening. White basket chairs and a table had been set out under one of the cedars, and here Dick was waiting. He had a smile in his eyes, the smile of a happy conspirator.

"Mab," he called.

And John Suvla was caught. She came out from between the pillars of the loggia with a child on either hand, and the boy was Dick's boy, the girl her mother's. They came across the lawn, the three pairs of eyes were on John Suvla.

"Here's Uncle Jack."

Beard and shabbiness did not seem to matter, for these young things saw the man, that handsome man with the audacious and laughing eyes, a man whose strong and eternal youth leaped out to meet them.

"Oh, Uncle Jack, how brown you are!"

"Of course he is," and the boy looked wise; "all travellers are brown. Have you shot tigers?"

Suvla laughed and lied.

"Men tigers, my son, and bad old elephants."

He held the boy by the shoulders and looked at him intently, and the boy gazed back without fear or without self-consciousness.

"Yes, you'll do. You will carry on like your father. English—in English lands."

He stayed with them for an hour, and seeing that he was growing restless Mab sent the children to bed.

Suvla John

"See you to-morrow, Uncle Jack?"

"You will."

Mab and the children passed away through the twilight, and presently the man heard her at her piano. Her inspiration seemed to wander, and then she began to play "Jardin sous la Pluie." Suvla sat very still—immensely still. He was feeling the goodness of life flowing into him, the goodness of these music-making hands, of the old house, the trees, the home. His world was a picture show, but the pictures were alive and vivid, and he loved to pass before them, tarrying a little while with each and getting the human stir of it.

When the rain had ceased to fall in Debussy's garden, John Suvla rose up and looked at the stars.

"She has given me the right spirit," he said; "a man should meet his enemy with peace in his heart. I shall go there now."

"To Summerhays?"

Suvla nodded.

"Jack, I'll come with you."

"No. I'll go alone. There is nothing to fear, my son; nothing."

"You will come back here?"

"I will."

XIII

SUVLA entered the green gates of Summerhays and walked calmly up to the house.

He rang no-bell nor made himself known to anyone, but turning into the grass path that ran in front of the windows he walked up and down there like a sentinel, or a man enjoying the cool of the evening and the blink of the stars.

In one of the darkened rooms a man was lying in a chair, with his limp hands resting on the arms of it; a miserable man whose mind was part of the darkness.

In the stillness of the night he heard those rhythmic, careless foot-falls, going up and down like the heart-beats of fate.

He was afraid, but in a little

while he became afraid of his own fear. He rose stealthily and crossed the room, his right hand closing upon something in his coat pocket. He stood very still and listened. The sound of footsteps had ceased, but his fear knew that this silence was like the holding of an enemy's breath.

Very cautiously he raised a corner of one of the blinds, and saw the dim garden and the massive outlines of the trees. The silence tantalized him. He raised yet more of the blind and began to push out a head and a hand that was armed. He was trembling, and the fabric of the blind quivered with his tremblings.

He was looking to the left, and from behind the screened window on the right a hand came out and seized his wrist.

"You won't need that thing, Blaber. Drop it."

Blaber remained mute, utterly and strangely mute. He did not resist, but let the weapon fall to the grass, and Suvla could see the round and staring eyes of him, like the eyes of some stupefied fish. His mouth hung open, and the arm that Suvla held was flaccid and toneless, a dead weight, paralysed.

"Seven years ago."

Blaber's eyelids flickered.

"So it is you, Shere."

"I think so. This is the first time that I have touched England since the Suvla days. You never expected me."

Blaber stared at him helplessly.

"You thought that I was nicely put away in that yellow soil, under the scrub and the heather. Well, where shall we talk? Here or inside?"

"Come in. I suppose you want money!"

With his free hand Suvla gave a twitch to the blind and it shot up, furling itself. He kept his hold on Blaber's wrist.

"If you had the heart of a louse, Blaber——! Go and sit down. I'll look after this thing for you."

(Continued on page 719)

By Warwick Deeping

Blaber put up a protesting hand, as though to ward off a blow.

"You are not going to shoot me, Shere!"

"Why should I shoot you? I am a happy man, and life's good."

He released Blaber and gathered up the revolver, and climbing through the window, raised all the blinds. The rim of the rising moon showed above the trees, and Blaber was staring at it with those wide and protruding eyes of his. The power of movement seemed to have gone from him. He stood in the middle of the room like some scared and sluggish animal, waiting for the fatal and inevitable blow.

Suvla looked at him.

"Sit down, Blaber."

His voice was kind and calming. It seemed to come from a height of strength, like a hand stretched down to pat and reassure a frightened animal. Blaber gave a slight start of vague surprise. He sat down in one of the leather chairs, a huge and comfortable chair, but it emphasized his utter discomfort. Suvla seated himself on the sill of the open window, his back to the rising moon, and Blaber could study his galliard head and the defiant optimism of that sharply bearded chin.

"Blaber, I'll begin by asking you a question. What do you expect me to do?"

"Make a little hell for me, I suppose."

"Why should I? Isn't it true that each man makes his own little hell, and you have made yours? You see, I know."

"What do you know?"

"Many things. You are the sort of a man whom a woman cannot live with. You are hated in this village. And if there is to be any hope for you, you will have to begin by hating yourself."

"Since when have you become a parson, John Shere?"

"My name's not Shere. And because I am telling you the damned truth about yourself, is that preaching sermons! A man's his

own sermon. You thought that you were going to get your hands full of life by laying me out. You were wrong."

Blaber made a restless movement.

"O—stop preaching. What are you going to do with me?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing!"

"I can't mend you, can I, or give you a new temper or make a sportsman of you? You have got to do that for yourself."

"Damn it, don't preach. What are you going to do with me?"

Suvla came down from the window-sill and stood over him.

"Man, I am going to give you back the life you tried to take away. Listen. John Shere is dead. He lives as a tramp and a vagabond, and a free-lance, one—John Suvla. To-morrow, I shall be gone from here; I may never come back again. And there are just three people in the world who know that you put a bullet into John Shere out there on the Peninsula."

"Three?"

"Just three. I know, Dick knows, Mab knows. But—I shall not tell, nor will these two others—unless—"

"Unless?"

"You choose to make us tell."

Blaber sat forward in his chair, his hands gripping the arms of it.

"What do you mean?"

"I am giving you your second chance, Bob Blaber. It is up to you to take it and use it. There may be no third chance. And so—good night."

He was on the sill of the window, outlined against the moon when Blaber threw up his hands.

"Shere! Damn you, must I begin all over again? O, my god—I can't!"

"Then—you are dead—and in hell. Fight, man, fight. Life's good."

"Good! It's a——"

"It's you, you—in cursing and guzzling and bullying and hating, or in loving and giving and laugh-

Suvla John

ing and playing. Get up and laugh, get up and laugh. Laugh at yourself—Good night."

He sprang down and was gone, and Blaber stood holding to the mullions of the window, face bewildered and contorted like the face of a man called back to life out of the grave.

XIV

SUVLA stood in the moonlight under the cedars and told those two all that had passed between him and Robert Blaber.

"Be a little kind to the poor devil. He may be worth it. Who knows?"

"You have let him off?"

"I have given him his second chance."

Both of them came to John Suvla and stood by him and held his hands.

"You great man, John."

Dick's wife said nothing, but put up her face to be kissed.

Then Suvla spoke, like one in a happy dream.

"Life's good. It might be good for all of us if we were not such fools, such greedy fools. And that poor fool wanted to take his life by the throat and throttle it, thinking to make it wholly his, to find it nothing but a corpse. Can life come to life again? Perhaps? Who knows?"

He put an arm about each of them.

"You two dear people have done

me good. I shall go away from here—happy, knowing that in one corner of the world there is honour and loyalty. Yes, I am going, when you and I, Dick, have seen some lawyer man and put our lives in order."

"Why go?"

"Because I'm what I am, wild. Even you could not tame me, Mab. I might steal out to listen to your music—sometimes, to leap back again into my wild woodlands like a fawn."

XV

IN Romsey a tall tramp with a canvas bag slung over his shoulder paused to speak to a loafer who was standing by a lamp-post with his hands stuffed into his pockets.

"Say, mate, seen the travelling show here?"

"What show?"

"Swings and a shooting gallery and all that."

"Oh, them! Left two days ago. Seed them on the road."

"Which road?"

"That there road to Wimborne and Dorchester."

The tramp swung his stick and bag from one shoulder to the other.

"One of the vans was yellow?"

"Yes, one of 'em was yellow. And there was a gal, sitting up driving the 'oss."

Suvla laughed.

"You saw her—anyway!"

He took the road to Wimborne.

WARWICK DEEPING.

Competition Corner

WE again make on offer of Two Prizes—one of Two Guineas and the other of One Guinea—to the competitors who send in the titles of the four stories they like best in order of merit. The prizes will be awarded to those whose cards most nearly coincide with the votes of the majority. Address: "Vote," THE STORY-TELLER, La Belle Sauvage,

Ludgate Hill, E.C.4, and send in by February 3, 1924.

This month we have much pleasure in awarding a prize of Two Guineas to:

MISS IVY CALDER, 204, Hillhouse Gardens, Springburn, Glasgow; and a prize of One Guinea to:

MISS F. S. PRICE, 35, Wheelwright Road, Erdington, Birmingham.

YOUTH

and Mr. Lovelace

By

WARWICK DEEPING

Illustrated by STANLEY DAVIS

THERE were occasions when Mr. Roger Lovelace rose at five o'clock in the morning, especially in spring or early summer when the birds were singing and the wind was not from the north-east. He would dress somewhat sketchily and, covering the sketchiness with a blue silk dressing-gown, go downstairs and let himself out into the garden. Fonthill Manor had a very notable garden, and history recorded that King Charles the First had trod the stones of its terrace.

This particular morning was a Sunday morning late in May, sunny and still, and as Mr. Lovelace descended the stairs he noticed that a hall window was open. Knowing the extreme carefulness of his elderly staff, Mr. Lovelace inferred that Fonthill Manor had received undesirable visitors in the night. Mr. Lovelace, going to examine the window, saw something lying close to the skirting-board. Bending down he picked up the object, a tiny red booklet, and opening it, was moved to raise ironic white eyebrows over its significance.

How very careless and sympathetic of the intruder to leave his motor driving licence behind!

Mr. Lovelace slipped the licence into a pocket of his dressing-gown, closed and relatched the window, and crossed the hall towards the door of the drawing-room. It was invariably his habit to visit this room when he came down early in the morning. The blinds were down, and raising them, Mr. Lovelace turned to look at a particular table which stood on the right of the armchair by the Adam fireplace. His white eyebrows seemed to draw together. That table had supported a little collection of snuff-boxes, and objets d'art, also a miniature that happened to

have for Mr. Lovelace a sentimental but profound significance.

"Damn the fellow, he might have left me that!"

For whenever Mr. Lovelace had entered the room early in the morning he had walked to the table, taken that miniature in his hand and contemplated it as an old man may contemplate the memory of the most exquisite and satisfying thing that had entered into his life.

Anger, and the passion to punish, may not survive certain spiritual experiences, and instead of disturbing the household on this Sunday morning and telephoning to the police, Mr. Lovelace let himself out into the garden. It was an exquisite morning, drenched with dew, and Mr. Lovelace remembered that Kitty Hallard his niece was coming down for lunch and avuncular advice upon a love affair, for strange to say, young things did come to lay their troubles on the knees of this old gentleman.

At breakfast Mr. Lovelace said to Thomson his butler, "Oh, Thomson, I have locked the things on the miniature table up in the safe."

"Just as well, sir. There have been quite a number of burglaries in the neighbourhood, sir."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have the police caught anybody?"

"No, sir. It isn't very easy to catch fellows who sneak down in cars. They've become so clever, sir."

"I suppose they have, Thomson."

The unknown intruder's driving licence had found a home in Mr. Lovelace's wallet.

Kitty Hallard was to arrive at Fonthill station by the 12.33, and soon after twelve Mr. Lovelace went

down to the stables for the small car he used when he drove himself. He insisted upon his chauffeur's Sunday remaining inviolate. Fonthill station was asleep on this Sunday in May, and Mr. Lovelace parked his car, and strolled into the station. A long covered gallery or bridge led across to the down platform, and here Mr. Lovelace made the discovery that the station was not quite deserted.

A FAIR young woman in a jade green summer frock was walking up and down here with a restlessness that was not of the Sabbath. She would go to the booking-office door, look right and left, and then return to her restless promenading. To Mr. Lovelace she suggested both agitation and an anger that was objecting to restraint. The inference was that she was expecting to be met here, or to meet somebody, and the occasion was not proving happy.

Mr. Lovelace, also walking to and fro, and feeling interested in youth's problem, suddenly heard himself addressed.

"Excuse me, but can you tell me whether a 'bus comes to the station?"

Mr. Lovelace raised his hat.

"I'm afraid not, but I'm not quite sure. The ticket-collector ought to be here in a moment. He should know."

Her blue eyes were brittle.

"Can one get a taxi?"

"You might, by 'phoning to the village."

She seemed to divine in this jocund old gentleman an essential kindness.

"Someone was to have met me."

"In a car?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps the car has broken down."

She looked sceptical, a little fierce.

"I don't think so."

"May I ask where you want to go?"

"The Burgage Manor Estate."

"Nearly a mile and a half."

"Yes."

Mr. Lovelace looked at his watch.

"I am meeting someone by this train. I have a car. If you care to wait I could give you a lift."

Her pretty face grew less sullen.

"It's very good of you. But wouldn't it be a bother?"

"Not in the least. If you will wait a few minutes I can drive you to the new estate."

The train came in, and about a dozen people climbed the steps from the down platform, but Kitty Hallard was not among them. Had Kitty missed her train, or had some emotional contretemps intervened? Knowing his niece as he did, Mr. Lovelace postulated either possibility. He turned away from the platform steps, to find Miss Green Frock waiting half-way across the bridge.

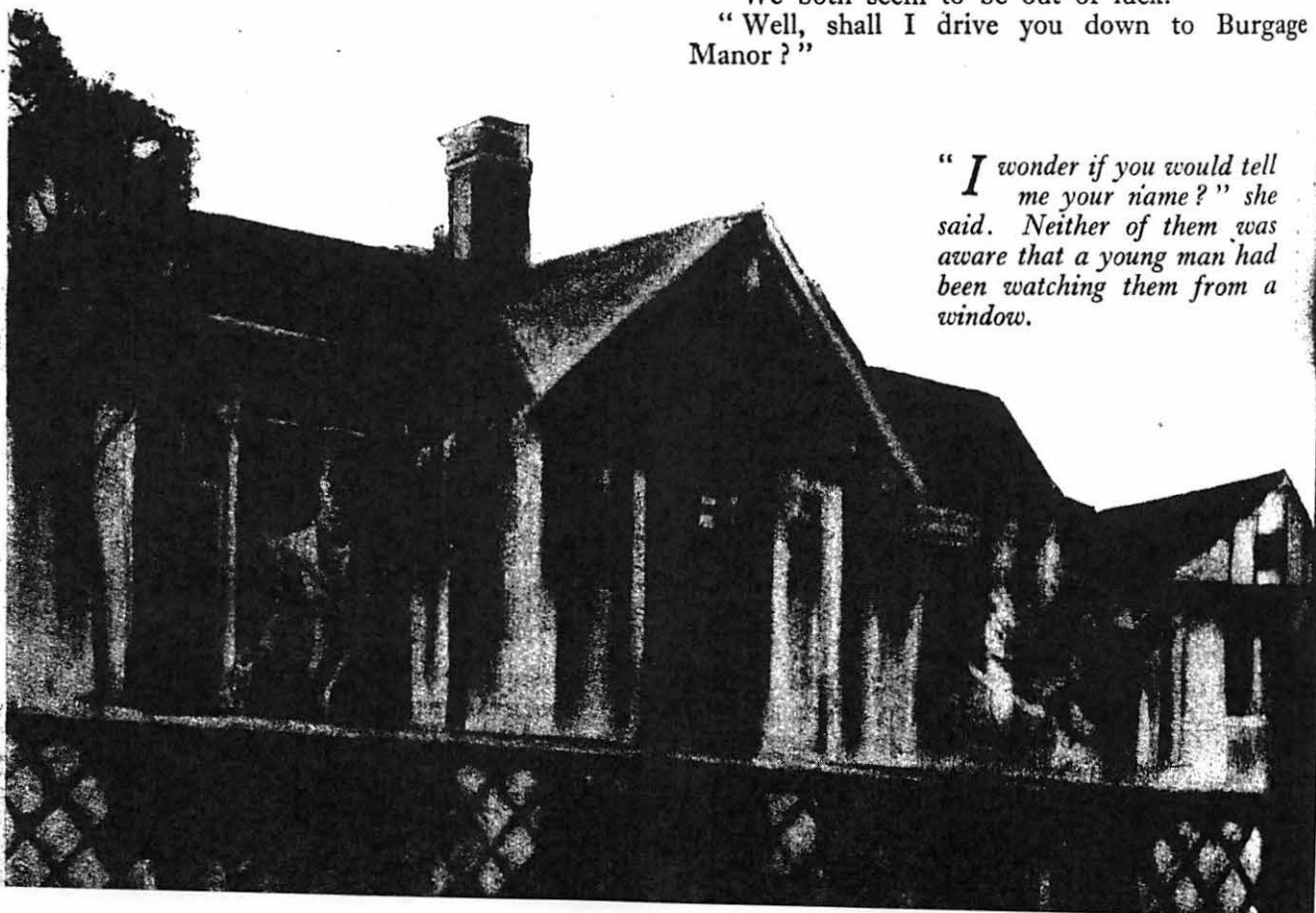
"I'm afraid my visitor hasn't turned up."

She smiled rather vaguely, for her sympathy could not help being perfunctory.

"We both seem to be out of luck."

"Well, shall I drive you down to Burgage Manor?"

"I wonder if you would tell me your name?" she said. Neither of them was aware that a young man had been watching them from a window.



"Thank you so much."

They walked across to Mr. Lovelace's car, and as he opened the door he was aware of her looking down the road as though she still hoped to see the car of the man who was to have met her. Ungallant fellow! Had there been a quarrel, or was this meeting to have witnessed a reconciliation? And then, as she slipped in and sat beside him he realized that she was afraid, not of the elderly person who was giving her a lift, but of some crisis in her life.

"Can you give me the address?"

"The address?"

"Yes, this new estate is a rather sprawling affair."

"Of course, how silly of me! It is a bungalow on the bit of road going down to the river."

"There are quite a number of bungalows."

"Of course. Tyne Cot is the name."

Mr. Lovelace was in the act of changing gear, and when he heard that name the coincidence was so clashing that he muffed his gears.

"Tyne Cot!"

"Yes. A little white bungalow."

Now, the name and address of the owner of the driving-licence which had been dropped inside the window was "Geoffrey Lascelles, Tyne Cot, Burgage Manor Estate, Fonthill."

Mr. Lovelace, surmounting the shock of the discovery, was moved to wonder whether this matter of housebreaking and a young man's failing to appear at the station might not have a dual significance. This mysterious burglar seemed



something of a bungler. And was he bungling some other business rather badly? Mr. Lovelace was not regretting his niece's vagaries. But could he ask questions? Hardly. At the moment he was attending to business and to a sudden splurge of Sunday traffic by the Ship Inn half-way through Fonthill village.

"Do you live here?" asked a voice.

"Yes. I have lived here all my life."

"I suppose you don't know any of the people on the Burgage Estate?"

"No, I'm afraid I don't."

Actually, the Burgage Manor Estate, the product of a commercial syndicate, had been a sorrow and an offence to Mr. Lovelace. He had tried to feel tolerant about this collection of modern cheapness that was rather like a red sore in the green flank of the Fonthill landscape. One had to allow that people might wish to live in the country, and Mr. Lovelace was an upholder of the country spirit, but what a pity that man should make a mess of the very beauty he was supposed to desire!

They crossed Fonthill bridge, and a kind of rainbow chalet under the poplars advertised the entrance to the estate. This was the syndicate's office. Mr. Lovelace turned the car into a very new concrete road which trailed like a tapeworm across what had been green meadows. He was aware of her hand indicating a bifurcation.

"To the right."

"Thank you."

"That's the bungalow. The one standing rather alone."

Mr. Lovelace pulled up outside Tyne Cot. It was a small and very white bungalow with a very red roof, surrounded by a piece of ground that pretended to be a garden, but suggested that the tenant had become discouraged. A cheap gate in a wire fence opened upon a path that had been laid down in home-made cement to imitate crazy paving. Mr. Lovelace got out of the car, partly because he was a courteous person, and partly because he felt sorry for the girl, and also for this pathetic and depressed little homestead.

"Thank you so much."

She gave Mr. Lovelace her hand, and from her face he gathered that she was at the gate of her crisis.

"I'm glad to have been of use."

"I wonder if you would tell me your name?"

"My name's Lovelace," and he wanted to add "my dear."

"Good-bye, Mr. Lovelace. It has been awfully good of you."

Mr. Lovelace re-entered his car, and the girl opened the gate and walked up to the apple green door of the bungalow. Neither of them was aware that a young man had been watching them from a window, a young man in grey flannel trousers and a yellow pullover, whose general appearance suggested

a reckless and tragic untidiness. Mr. Lovelace drove on in search of some convenient place where he could turn his car, and the girl rang the bungalow bell.

It was one of those mechanical bells attached to the door, which, on the pressure of a finger, emit a strident and angry buzzing. She seemed to flinch a little at the sound, and then to stiffen herself to meet a confrontation that might be as disturbing and discordant as the voice of the bell. She turned and stood with her back to the door with a tense and listening look that somehow asked to be hidden.

Footsteps, the turning of a latch. With a suggestion of casualness she faced about.

"Hallo, my lad! So you are at home? I wondered."

HE was a very dark young man, pale and intense, and he looked at her half defiantly.

"Care to come in?"

"Oh, thank you. I have been enjoying the beauty of the railway station. I suppose you couldn't be bothered——?"

He stood back from the door.

"Oh, come in. I'm not feeling like more storms."

"Well, why make them? And you don't look particularly festive."

"Yes, I know, I haven't shaved. Can't you be a little tolerant, Mavis?"

She gave him a quick look, and the brittle surface of her seemed to soften.

"All right. We will pass that over. But why didn't you meet me?"

She walked on into the little sitting-room, and he followed her.

"I couldn't help it. Wasn't feeling like it?"

"You're not ill."

"Not exactly ill."

She sat down on the sofa under the window, and as she did so Mr. Lovelace's car went by, and the young man observed it.

"Who's the old lad who gave you a lift?"

"He's rather a lamb. A Mr. Lovelace. Lives near here."

"Mr. Lovelace!"

"Yes."

"Good God, that's funny! Well, I suppose you had better know. I have been waiting in here all the morning for the police."

She stared at him.

"The police?"

"Besides, I had no driving licence."

"What—are—you talking about?"

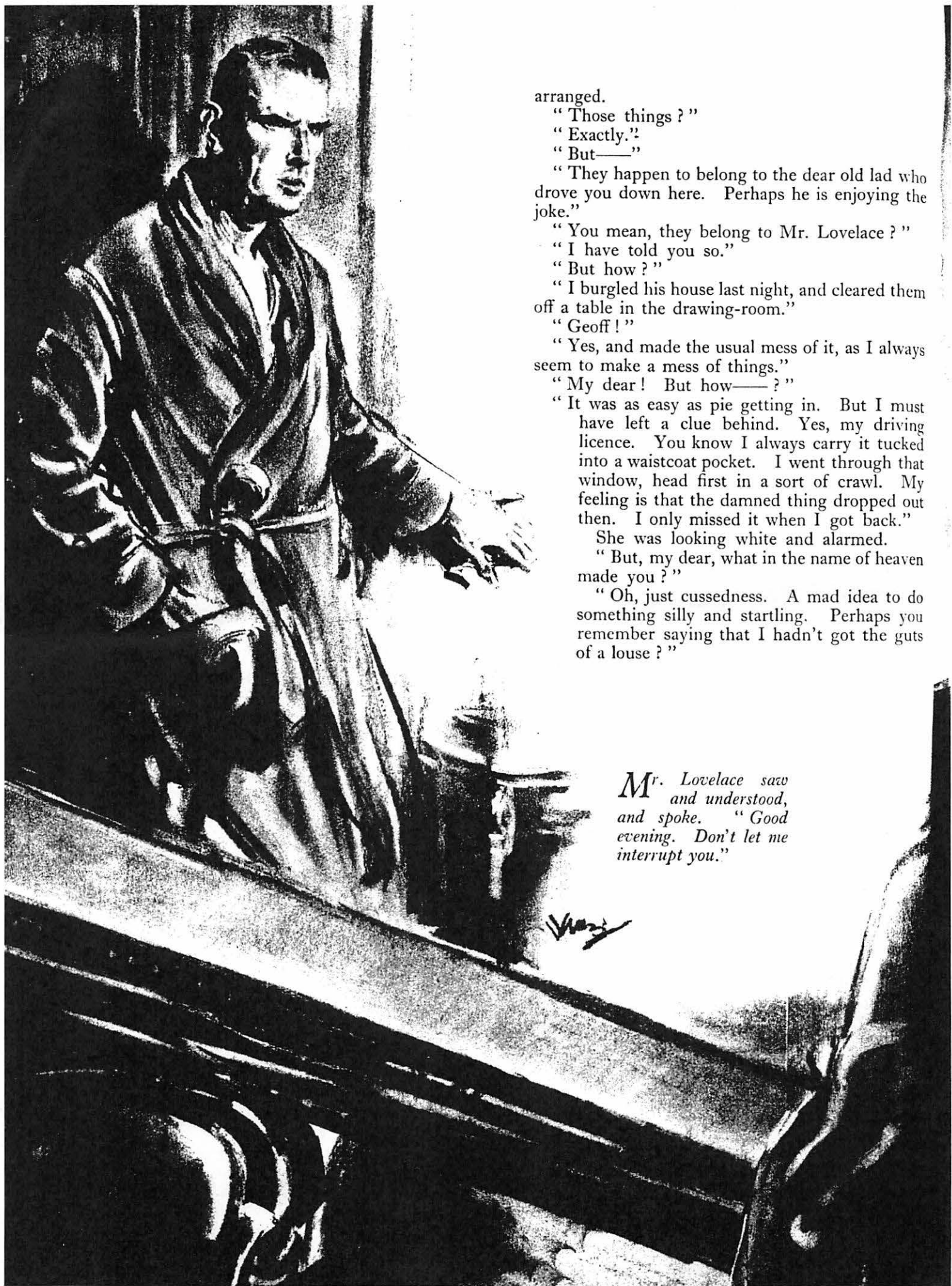
He turned, and with his hands in his trouser pockets and his shoulders slouched, asked her a question.

"See anything new and strange in the room?"

He was looking towards a cheap, oak sideboard, and on it she saw a number of objects nicely



Suddenly she stood up and walked across to the sideboard. "Geoff, let's try to stop making a mess of things."



arranged.

"Those things?"

"Exactly."

"But——"

"They happen to belong to the dear old lad who drove you down here. Perhaps he is enjoying the joke."

"You mean, they belong to Mr. Lovelace?"

"I have told you so."

"But how?"

"I burgled his house last night, and cleared them off a table in the drawing-room."

"Geoff!"

"Yes, and made the usual mess of it, as I always seem to make a mess of things."

"My dear! But how——?"

"It was as easy as pie getting in. But I must have left a clue behind. Yes, my driving licence. You know I always carry it tucked into a waistcoat pocket. I went through that window, head first in a sort of crawl. My feeling is that the damned thing dropped out then. I only missed it when I got back."

She was looking white and alarmed.

"But, my dear, what in the name of heaven made you?"

"Oh, just cussedness. A mad idea to do something silly and startling. Perhaps you remember saying that I hadn't got the guts of a louse?"

Mr. Lovelace saw and understood, and spoke. "Good evening. Don't let me interrupt you."

W. H. W.

She flashed out at him.

"I never said anything so vulgar."

"Yes, you did."

"I didn't."

"But you did."

Suddenly, she looked at him with a kind of tragic remorsefulness, swallowed, stood up, and walked across to the sideboard.

"Geoff, let's try to stop making such a mess of things. If I lost my temper——"

He looked at her poignantly.

"Isn't it a bit too late? I seem to have made the final mess. I'm just waiting for the fireworks to go off."

She was examining the objects on the sideboard

with the air of one whose hands and thoughts were completely dissociated. How was it that the disease called love seemed to involve you in a fever and delirium? Was it the fault of love or of the lovers? Yes, she had to confess that his sensitive ineffectualness had exasperated her, and that his failure to stand up to other men in the rough and tumble of worldly success had hurt her pride in him. But what right had she to be hurt? She was looking at the miniature, and it seemed to come happily and compassionately into her hands. She was aware of saying to herself "What a lovely face!"

Young Lascelles stood watching her with curious and dispassionate interest. Yes, the thing called love was a strange madness, a kind of eruption of



the sex self in you, which, unless it became gently selfless and wise, could destroy your soul. He too had looked long and understandingly at that miniature, and seen in it something that their two crude young selves seemed to lack.

He saw her replace the miniature. There was a moment of hesitation, and then her lips moved.

"I'm sorry, Geoff."

"Sorry?"

"Yes, perhaps I am beginning to understand. It was my fault."

His hands came out of his pockets.

"Oh no, my dear, mine."

"No, mine."

"Are we going to quarrel about that?"

"I have been so crude and silly. No, don't let's quarrel, Geoff, dear, any more."

He went to her quickly, and his touch was tentative.

"Is that possible? There are all sorts of things in me that irritate you."

"No, Geoff, I don't think that's true. It's the crude, greedy kid in me that has been all wrong."

"Mavis!"

"Yes, dear. Somehow, after looking at that face . . ."

"It is rather lovely."

"Yes, in such a different way."

His arm slipped round her.

"Well, I don't mind so much now. My silly joke can come back to roost. Hadn't I better go and confess?"

"To Mr. Lovelace?"

"No, the police."

"Oh, not that! You don't really know, do you, where you lost your licence?"

"I'm pretty sure it was there. I've got a flair about it."

She stood rigid.

"Then he must have known. I mean, when he drove me here. Yes, I do remember now when I told him the address."

"Yes."

"He made a bad gear change."

"I'll take that as evidence. I'll have a shave, Mavis, and then go. But lunch. You haven't—"

"Oh, I don't want anything to eat, until— But, Geoff, I've got an idea."

"Well?"

"Why shouldn't we put those things back?"

"In his drawing-room?"

"Yes."

"What, I'm to break in again?"

"We."

"What do you mean?"

"Both of us."

"Good Lord, do you think I—"

"Remember what we promised. Besides, don't you see, it's rather a lovely sort of thing to do. Not to go whimpering to him and apologizing, but doing

it secretly. A kind of beau geste. Don't you see?"

He stood looking at the things on the sideboard.

"By Jove, I do. It's somehow right, so utterly silly and right, like being in love."

"Geoff!"

"Yes, in a new sort of way, dear. If nothing happens before to-night I'll do it, or try to do it."

She put up her face and kissed him.

"I'm coming too."

She would not be argued out of the adventure, and after all her presence would prove defensive should they be discovered. A cynical world might not believe their story, but since looking at that miniature she had a feeling that neither Mr. Lovelace nor the lady belonged to the world of the cynics. Moreover, she herself had suffered one of those flashes of illumination in which compassion and comprehension descend like the spirit upon the raw flesh of youth. She felt protective, and that which had angered her, now provoked something else in her, a tenderness that was maternal.

The day passed, and the hand of the Law was absent. They sat and talked to each other as they had not talked before.

"I'll get this garden tidied up."

She had laughed and said, "And I have things to tidy up in myself. Odds and ends."

THERE was a full moon that night. They had wrapped up the snuffboxes and enamels most carefully in paper and packed them into a small suitcase, but the miniature, swathed in tissue paper, had a place by itself in Lascelles's breast pocket. It was well after midnight when they left the bungalow, and crossing the bridge, walked through Fonthill village and up the hill to the Manor House. A police constable on patrol had passed them with a casual stare which a man on duty might give to a pair of lovers to whom time was of no account. Fonthill Manor confronted them as a dark mass of trees. They came to a blue gate between high brick pillars capped with stone balls.

Lascelles opened the gate upon a mysterious, leafy tunnel patched with moonlight. Both of them paused to gaze.

"It's rather wonderful."

"Scared?"

"No, Geoff. But it looks as though it went on for ever."

"Romance?"

"Or a fairy tale."

They walked up the mysterious drive, holding hands, to find the red brick Tudor house confronting them with a multitude of windows. The moonlight glimmered on them. The drive swept round the house, but Lascelles led the way up a flight of steps to the terrace. They sat down on the top step and took off their shoes.

He leaned over to whisper in her ear.

"Better stay here."

"No."

"Well, not another word. I only hope they haven't screwed up the window."

The particular window was a sash inserted in the time of George the Third. Lascelles put down the suitcase, took a small torch and a table knife from his pocket, and slipping the blade of the knife between the two sashes, pressed back the catch. With infinite care he raised the lower sash, climbed in, and held out a hand to Mavis.

And then the torch failed them. They stood with their heads close together while he fiddled with the thing. He whispered.

"No good. There's the moon. If I can draw the curtains in that room——"

It was Mavis who collided with the leather screen just inside the drawing-room door. It crashed, and for some seconds they stood there in horrified silence. Then she felt his mouth close to her ear.

"I don't care. I am going through with this."

"Yes, Geoff, let's be thorough."

He felt his way to one of the windows, drew back the curtain and let in the moonlight. A second window added yet more light. The house seemed completely and satisfyingly silent. Lascelles put down the suitcase, knelt, and began to unpack.

LIKE many old men, Mr. Lovelace was an indifferent sleeper, and on this moonlight night in May he had been unable to capture sleep. His bedroom was immediately over the drawing-room, and he was reading in bed when the screen crashed. Old age is supposed to be cowardly and pusillanimous, but Mr. Lovelace was neither. Life had so little more to give him that he was not afraid of losing things that had ceased to be very precious. He got out of bed, put on his blue silk dressing-gown and a pair of soft slippers, opened the door quietly, and descended the stairs. They were of oak and very massive, and they did not creak.

Mr. Lovelace knew where to place his hand on a switch just inside the drawing-room door. The two young things intent upon the business of unpacking had heard nothing. The sudden illumination caught them on their knees beside the suitcase like a couple of lovers unpacking a picnic basket.

Mr. Lovelace saw and understood and spoke.

"Good evening. Don't let me interrupt you. I happened to be awake."

Mavis, on her knees, a snuffbox in one hand, a piece of paper in the other, seemed to find her voice.

"I am so sorry we have disturbed you. We were just putting these things back. I believe they belong on that table."

Young Lascelles had got on his feet.

"We—or rather I, owe you an explanation, sir."

Mr. Lovelace sat down in a Louis Quinze chair.

"That's quite all right. Please finish, and then we can talk."

"Perhaps you will see that everything is there?"

"Oh, I'll leave it to you."

He sat and watched these two embarrassed and silent young things arrange all the plunder on the table. But one object was missing, and he remarked on it.

"Just one—article."

Lascelles's hand went to his pocket.

"I have it here, sir, if it is what you mean."

Mr. Lovelace stretched out a hand and took the little parcel in its tissue paper. He unwrapped it, and for the moment youth forgot its crisis in watching his face.

"Yes, this is the particular treasure."

He looked up at the girl.

"So you found him at home. I'm glad. Yes, this was a portrait of my wife painted when she was in the early thirties. Dead, yes, twenty years ago. I should have been sorry to have lost this. Thank you for returning it." He held it out to Mavis. "I would like you to place it on the table."

She took the miniature from him, but before returning it to the table, she stood contemplating it.

"May I say something?"

"Of course, my dear."

"It's such a lovely face. Somehow, when I saw it, I——"

"She was a rather lovely woman. She taught me a great deal."

"That's how it came to me."

But young Lascelles's face was eager and impatient.

"May I tell you, sir, what a cad and an ass I have been? I didn't take these things, seriously, I mean, not as a——"

Mr. Lovelace smiled at him.

"There is hope for the self-confessed ass, my dear fellow. I have had that experience. Supposing we leave the rest unsaid."

"But, sir——"

"I think I have something of yours upstairs. I'll go and fetch it."

He left them. He seemed a long time absent, and he appeared to be opening other doors. Young Lascelles and the girl, holding hands by the table, looked at each other questioningly.

"I say, do you think he was mocking us?"

"Geoff!"

"He seems too priceless to be true."

"Didn't you see the way he looked at that picture? Listen, he's coming back."

There was another and curious sound as Mr. Lovelace approached the door, the clink of glass against glass. The lights were on in the hall, and through the doorway they saw the figure in the blue silk dressing-gown carrying a silver tray.

"Not John the Baptist's head on a salver, my lad, but your driving licence and a little champagne!"

POSTED

You cried over "Sorrell and Son" by Warwick

31

THE FISHING INN at Invermurray was twenty miles from a railway station. Invermurray itself was as primitive as its surroundings, and the overconfident motorist who had not troubled to reserve rooms might find himself stranded outside the inn. He would be told to ring up the Angus Arms at Fort George, and Fort George lay seventeen miles away over the hills, and the road that led to it was like the bed of a torrent.

The Appleyards had booked rooms. Arthur Appleyard was that sort of man. There was nothing adventurous about him. He ran to thinness in nose and chin and shoulders, and his pale, precise eyes looked at life through pince-nez. The Appleyard car, neat and gray and inconspicuous, drew up outside the inn.

His wife laid a gloved hand on her husband's arm. "Arthur, how sublime!"

Grace Appleyard was refined. She had a select assortment of adjectives, and an austere mouth. She must hold up her moment like a flower, and exclaim over it, so the Appleyard car retained its occupants for a whole minute while Grace appreciated the beauties of Invermurray.

She had to be permitted to indicate these beauties in the manner of a schoolmistress pointing a pencil. She would say that the beech trees suggested Corot, and probably she would be wrong, but to Grace Appleyard a beech tree was never a beech tree, or a cloud a cloud. They were symbols, sublimations, something refined and arty.

A tall Scotchman, the proprietor of the inn, came out to see why the occupants of the car tarried. He raised a hat. He had a soft voice and trews, and had a kilt been substituted for the trews, Mrs. Appleyard would have called him Barrie.

Mr. Appleyard explained that they had booked rooms for a fortnight. He had come to fish, while his wife improved upon nature. Mine host smiled gravely upon them.

"Appleyard is the name."

"The garage is on the left, sir. Perhaps the lady will be pleased to get out here." He opened the door for Mrs. Appleyard, who was disappointed in the flavor of his Scotch. It was more trews than kilt. The world was becoming so stereotyped.

She emerged, and a red-headed youth appeared to deal with the luggage. Mr. Appleyard was a meticulous traveler. The luggage was always packed like parts of a jig-saw puzzle, and Mr. Appleyard was careful of his paint.

He drove the car into the garage. He was fussy about garages; he mistrusted other people's consciences and their capacities as drivers. He maneuvered the car into a vacant corner, checked his mileage and the level of the gasoline gauge, and entered both items in a notebook. He locked all the doors. He scrutinized all four tires, and satisfied himself that the oil stood at a safe level. Then he went out and lighted a cigaret and wondered whether his wife had ordered tea.

She had. She had approved of the rooms and



Mixed

attended to her face. Art, delicately practiced, was indispensable. She had ordered scones. They sat down to tea in the lounge, and Mrs. Appleyard ate a good tea, though she always asserted that food did not interest her.

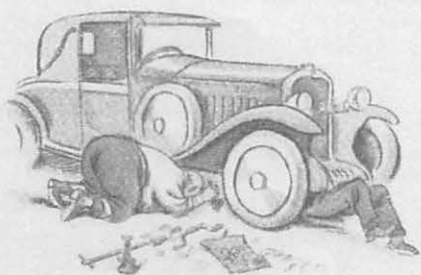
Afterwards, they set out for a stroll along the river in the direction of the loch. His wife explained to Arthur that the light would be perfect, and that running water should always be looked at under slanting rays. He was not the sort of man who grunted and asked her whether her category included taps. Mrs. Appleyard's previous husband had been that sort of man, and most refinedly she had divorced him, and married Appleyard three years later.

The pair had hardly disappeared down the wooded path to the river when another car drove up outside the Invermurray Inn. It drew up quite differently from the Appleyard car, with a swanking scrunch and an air of "What ho, people, I'm here."

It was a swashbuckling car, a corsair of a car, large and brilliant in claret and cream, and out of it got a very large man in the loudest of Harris tweeds. A large lady remained momentarily seated. She suggested a puff ball, or French confectionery, or a meringue.

The man was a cheerful, florid person. He shook hands with mine host.

"Well, Mr. Fraser, here we are. How are the little silver fellows? How's Mr. Fraser?" He began to heave



Deeping ~ In this story He makes You Laugh



Mates

out luggage, without waiting for the red-headed youth. "Got any other people here? What, full up tonight? That's the stuff. Now, old thing—"

His wife got out. "I could drink the river dry, Mr. Fraser . . . Tea? Oh, yes. I'll just go up and titivate."

Her husband banged the snorting vehicle into the garage, slammed a door and turned his back on it. He swaggered into the lounge, saw the visitors' book on a table, looked at it and let out a "Well, I'm damned!"

His blue eyes protruded. He guffawed. He picked up a pen, and under the neat name of Appleyard he scrawled that of Struthers. Then he went upstairs and shouted to his wife. "Say, baby, where are you?"

"Here. Number Nine."

He opened a door. "Say, this is some crash. Who the devil do you think is here?"

"I'm not good at guessing." She was using a lipstick in front of the mirror.

"The Appleyards."

His wife turned to stare. "Good Lord, not—"

"Must be. He's put himself down as Arthur. Dear Grace's second attempt. Never seen the fellow—yet."

His wife looked peeved. "Well, that wouldn't be likely, would it?" Then she burst out laughing.

"Wong. I've got an idea. I've a whole lot to make up

Appleyards they did not go for a stroll along the river. Mabel Struthers sat on the veranda while her husband got out his fishing tackle. They were conversational.

"Wonder if the fellow is going to fish."

"They'd hardly be here, would they, if he didn't?"

"Oh, you don't know Gracie as I do."

"Did—you mean?"

"Yes, past tense, thank the Lord. I say, Babs, it's going to be rather funny. I'm simply dying to see Gracie's face."

"I don't know that I am. I wonder how long they are staying."

"I might go and find out."

With a pipe stuck in the corner of his mouth he entered the inn by the garden door, and making for the bar, found Mr. Fraser there. He asked Mr. Fraser what he would have, but Mr. Fraser was a careful body and refrained from too many drinks. Mr. Struthers had a whisky.

"I see you've got some people named Appleyard here. I used to know some Appleyards."

"They arrived just before you, sir."

"Staying long?"

"A fortnight."

"Fishing?"

"The gentleman is."

"Don't you give him my gillie, Fraser."

"No; I've booked Jock for you, sir."

Mr. Struthers walked out into the lounge, and with suddenness found himself in the presence of his previous wife. She had come in with a little bunch of

wild roses, her husband having gone to the garage to collect a pair of glasses that had been packed away under one of the seats.

The confrontation was abrupt and dramatic. It was more shocking to Mrs. Appleyard, because she had not been prepared for it and because the person of Jack Struthers symbolized all that Mrs. Appleyard had taught herself to condemn. Having had her refined self-love outraged by him, she had come to hate the memory of him. A disgusting affair. She was not a woman who could forgive.

Struthers, removing his pipe from his mouth, presented her with a grin. "Well, upon my word! If this isn't the most extraordinary—!"

She was blue-eyed ice. She was shocked and astonished. Her own blatant, bounding past insulting her in this peaceful Highland valley! She confronted Struthers as though she had been addressed by some insufferable stranger.

"I beg your pardon?"

His grin faded. "Oh, all right, Gracie. I couldn't help—"

She walked past him, round him and out through the



door. There was a wooden finality about the set of her shoulders, and Struthers, looking rather like a large dog that had been cuffed, retreated towards the garden.

Grace met Arthur coming from the garage. He waved the glasses. "Found them all right. I knew I'd put them in that locker." Then he became aware of Grace's frosty face.

She said, "We must leave here at once."

"Leave? But what on earth—?"

She explained John Struthers and this impertinent resurrecting of an unpleasant past, but Arthur was not so shocked as he should have been. Besides, Invermurray was one of the choicest spots in Scotland, and he was delighted with it. He demurred.

"I don't see that it's necessary. If anyone ought to

went out to the veranda and sat in a chair and felt chilly. A green gloom descended; the river murmured incessantly. From the lounge came cheerful laughter.

"Arthur."

"Yes, my dear."

"We must have a sitting room. I won't stay here without a sitting room."

"I don't suppose there is one."

"Go at once and see."

Arthur went and was fortunate in finding that Mr. Fraser had received a letter by the late post from people who had engaged the only sitting room in the inn and who had found they were unable to travel. Arthur engaged the room. The additional expense was vexatious, of course, but then—Grace had to be placated.



And there was her second husband playing cards with the cad who had outraged her self-love in her first marriage.

leave, it will be the other people. If they have any sense of decency—"

"That was just what John lacked."

But Arthur was obstinate. It was six o'clock. The nearest inn was miles away, and probably it was full. "Be reasonable. We can see what happens tomorrow."

The dinner hour arrived, and the Appleyards and the Strutherses found themselves in opposite corners. Jack Struthers sat down as though the whole room belonged to him and all the other people were his guests. He wore a dinner jacket, and Arthur had remained in a lounge suit. Mrs. Struthers looked fresh and animated in a Paris frock.

Arthur stole secret and interested glances at his predecessor. Struthers was rather a bounder, and it was amazing to Arthur that he should ever have married Grace. And then Struthers ordered champagne, and was blatant about it. Champagne at Invermurray!

Grace sat rigid, elbows tucked in, busy with a soup spoon. Her utter disapproval of Struthers grew combative. John had always been a gross and insensitive person.

She said, "I have changed my mind."

Arthur nodded. "What about a little heck?"

"No, water, thank you."

Ostensibly, both the Strutherses and the Appleyards had come to Invermurray to fish, and no previous domestic experiments should have interfered with the day's sport. At nine next morning half a dozen cars were waiting to start for the loch.

Struthers stood chatting to a group of gillies. Mrs. Struthers was stowing lunch away in their highly colored car. Mrs. Appleyard appeared, exchanged ambiguous glances with the Struthers woman, and became the victim of a mood.

She had a headache. The glare on the water would try her eyes. Arthur must go alone. He went, and Grace Appleyard spent the day in sacred solitude, mooning about the moors and woods, and feeling upset and murderous. She would have liked to play Catherine of Russia to John Struthers, and had him hunted through the hotel lounge and thrown, bound, into the river. She was a good woman but a woman, and too much goodness exaggerates the elemental instincts.

About six, looking from the window of their sitting room, she saw the Strutherses' car return. Struthers had had a good day. He displayed his catch to Mr. Fraser. She could hear him asserting that one of the fish must weigh twenty pounds if it weighed an ounce.

She hoped that Arthur had caught a still larger fish, but when Arthur returned she was shocked to hear

Mixed Mates (Continued from page 52)

but the seat of his gillie's trousers. "Simply couldn't get a rise, somehow. I tried five different kinds of fly."

Grace did not ask what particular species of fly he had used on the gillie. Her headache had returned.

She said, "Jack—I mean the Struthers man caught a twenty-pounder. You must do better tomorrow."

Almost her voice insisted. The Struthers creature could not be allowed to outshine them in a car and clothes and piscatorial skill.

But neither Mr. Appleyard nor Mr. Struthers caught a fish next day, because no one went fishing. It rained. It rained as it rains on the stage, in a kind of solid, streaky sheet. Mabel Struthers sat in the lounge, smoked innumerable cigarettes and read every magazine in the place. Grace remained in the sitting room with one of Scott's novels. The various men mooned about the place, and smoked and drank and bored each other, and kept looking out of windows. They made encouraging remarks.

"It's too heavy to last."

"I bet you it will break about four."

But it did last. It rained for two nights and two days, and on the morning of the third day it was still raining. Struthers and one or two desperate souls had been reduced to playing darts in the bar for sixpenny points. And on the morning of that third day, Mr. Appleyard, bored, went out through the rain to the garage to tinker with his car.

He decided to change the wheels to equalize the wear on the tires, and he was squatting and adjusting the jack when he heard someone else enter the garage. It was Struthers, also desirous of something to play with.

Providence provided it, for when Mr. Struthers started pulling things and pressing things he discovered that his lights would not work. He said, "Damn!" and Mr. Appleyard cocked an ear; he was not permitted to say "damn" save in the most secret of solitudes.

There were sounds of activities with a screw driver, and Mr. Struthers said "Damn!" still more loudly.

Mr. Appleyard, being human and intensely bored, could not restrain himself. "Something wrong, sir?"

Mr. Struthers made remarks about his sanguinary lights and the sanguinary chauffeur he had left at home, and the still more sanguinary weather. Mr. Appleyard became eager and excited.

"Battery all right?"

"Seems all right; plenty of water in it."

Appleyard joined Struthers. "Short circuit, perhaps. Or perhaps the switch."

Now Arthur was really knowledgeable about cars and the intricate system of wires and things connected with their lighting. He asked if he might have a look at things, and Mr. Struthers agreed, confessing that—to him—these infernal wires were no more than a tangle of sanguinary black worms. They got into all sorts of attitudes and contortions—or, rather, Arthur did—and they became confidential about the weather and chauffeurs and the income tax.

Arthur discovered the trouble and cured it. He was immensely pleased. "Well, that's that."

"Awfully good of you, old chap."

"Oh, not a bit. Rather a relief to puzzle something out."

"Yes, it would be. I could never make head or tail of my first wife's wiring system. Oh, I beg your pardon. What a sanguinary ass! I quite forgot—"

Mr. Appleyard was not offended. "Most extraordinary coincidence."

"I should say so. Somehow, your wife couldn't see the humor of it, old chap. She sets such a standard."

Mr. Appleyard was wiping his hands on a rag. "She does. High standards are rather—exacting."

"Damned difficult—some women. I beg your pardon, old chap."

"Oh, not a bit."

"Well, what about a little drink? Have one with me?"

"Thanks, I will."

"Play bridge?"

"Yes, I'm rather keen on the game."

"Splendid."

Meanwhile, a less peaceable *rencontre* had occurred in the lounge. Grace, suffering from ennui and too much Scott, had descended and found herself alone with Mrs. Struthers, and suddenly Mrs. Struthers had become conversational, and Grace had taken up the challenge. But she was at a disadvantage, for Mrs. Struthers pretended to be innocent, and quite ignorant of previous complications.

"Rather hard upon the poor men; this weather."

"I think it is just as difficult for us."

"Oh, no, really, men are such kids; must have something to play with. Isn't your husband rather delicate?"

Grace breathed through her nostrils. "Not in the least. Certainly, he does not look like an ox."

Mrs. Struthers laughed. "My boy never has an ache or a pain. He has such a splendid physique. He makes me think of one of those old vikings who sailed around bullying everybody and getting the goods."

What a vulgar person! Mrs. Appleyard made a disparaging remark about the vikings.

Mrs. Struthers was cheerfully obtuse. "Oh, I don't agree. I like a man to be a bit big and bouncy. I think that sort of man is fascinating. My man—is—fascinating. You should see him when he is really angry."

Mrs. Appleyard slipped badly. "I have. Disgusting exhibition of childish tantrums. I beg your pardon. I mean, any man who can't keep his temper—"

"Oh, I see. Doesn't your man ever lose his temper?"

"Mr. Appleyard is too—"

"Nice?"

"I disapprove of the word 'nice.' So suburban."

"Dear old Surbiton. Let's see, you're down in the book as Woking."

Mrs. Struthers began to laugh, and suddenly Mrs. Appleyard rose, and surveying her with destructive surprise, turned towards the corridor.

She said, "Probably—obviously—your husband has not told you that I— Yes, my first experiment. A most unfortunate experiment. I think I should know all there is to be known about Mr. John Struthers. I divorced him. It was a disgraceful case. Good afternoon."

She stalked out, and Mrs. Struthers buried her face in a cushion.

At half past twelve Mrs. Appleyard developed a headache. She had luncheon alone in the sitting room, but Mr. Appleyard was less sympathetic than usual. He lunched downstairs, and his wife did not see him again until tea time. And again, after tea, he disappeared, and his wife, becoming suspicious, went downstairs to explore and found him playing cards with the Strutherses and a common little person from Glasgow.

She was hurt and offended. When Arthur went up to change for dinner, after standing cocktails all round, he found silence, an arctic silence. But



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he had had experience with these silences; also, he was unaccustomed to so many cocktails.

"What's the matter? Headache worse?" His abruptness was mildly alcoholic. He appeared to have caught some of Struthers' jovial bluster.

"I did not think you could be so grossly disloyal, Arthur."

"Disloyal?"

"Sitting down with those people; playing cards with a man—a cad—who made my early life—"

Mr. Appleyard was unhitching his braces. "Oh, come now, be a woman of the world. One's got to compromise sometimes. Struthers isn't half—"

She was immeasurably shocked. "Men are incredible. No sense of decency. I believe you are all alike."

Mr. Appleyard dropped his trousers. "Well, damn it, p'raps we are."

Mrs. Appleyard dined upstairs. And next morning she breakfasted in bed, though the rain had ceased and the sun was shining. Arthur was in profound disgrace. She spoke to him very occasionally with a refrigeratory gentleness, a kind of wounded and austere sweetness. He appeared shy and sulky. He was a man of peace, but he went off to fish with Struthers, and in the boat he and Struthers were men together.

"Grace got one of her headaches, has she?"

"Yes."

"I know 'em, old man. They drove me to play the Solomon. If I were you—"

Mr. Appleyard gloomed. "I say. Just tell me, did you ever hear Grace laugh—I mean a real laugh, not a sort of superior whining?"

Mr. Struthers reflected. "No, I don't think I ever did. She's got a sort of tombstone on her soul. I believe that if a chap could make Grace laugh—"

"There might be hope. Fact is, Struthers, I'd like to see her hysterical with laughing; so bad that she couldn't stop. I'd like her to laugh for three whole days, and then—somehow I'd feel that she could never be superior again. Fact is, whenever she tried to get solemn in the future, I'd tickle her."

Mr. Struthers sat up, and lost a rise. "By Jove!" he said. "Fancy tickling Grace! But it's an idea. Why not try it?"

"If something would start her laughing," said Grace's husband.

"Say, we're vulgar fellows, Appleyard."

"Seems to me, old man, some women never learn the virtues of vulgarity."

Mr. Appleyard's conviction was that his wife would never produce more than a cultured titter, but in this he was wrong. That very night the Invermurray Hotel suffered one of those catastrophes that appear to be prevalent in Scotland, where inns are particularly precious. It had a fire.

It was a mild fire, and it originated in the kitchen quarters, but about ten minutes after midnight the alarm was raised by Mr. Fraser in pajamas and an ulster. There was not exactly a panic, but the whole hotel scuttled through a film of smoke out into the garden, while Mr. Fraser and a groom and one or two chauffeurs became active with Pyrene cylinders and soda-water siphons.

Mr. Appleyard and his wife had put on mackintoshes. Moreover, the disheveled ladies and gentlemen on the lawn were veiled by the darkness. Mr. Struthers could be heard reassuring the assembly.

"I suppose everybody's here?"

"I think so."

"Mr. and Mrs. Appleyard? They were in the turret room."

Mr. Appleyard said, "Yes, we're here."

He had brought an electric torch with him, and without realizing the indiscretion, he switched it on. A beam shot forth, wavered, and like a searchlight fixed itself upon a particular figure.

And suddenly Mr. Appleyard became aware of the grotesqueness of the situation. He was fascinated.

Someone exclaimed: "Oh, switch off that horrid torch!"

The beam swung sideways and illuminated another figure, and Appleyard heard a sound like the sudden catching of a breath. It was followed by a spasmodic sputtering, and then someone began to laugh. Mr. Appleyard stared. The light was focused on Struthers, a kind of horrible parody of Struthers. He stood in jazz-patterned orange-and-purple pajamas, the legs of which were stuffed into black waders. He had a coat buttoned over his shoulders, but the bulging panoply below was that of some monstrous cushion.

And then Mr. Appleyard realized that the hysterical laughter emanated from his wife. It appeared to be uncontrollable. Hurriedly he extinguished the

torch and got hold of his wife's arm.

"My dear, you mustn't!"

He led her away across the lawn. She did not resist. Leaning against him, she continued to pulsate.

Mr. Appleyard remonstrated. "Do control yourself."

She stuttered. "I—I—c-can't. Did you see—see—his shape?"

Mr. Appleyard had seen it. He led his wife still farther into the darkness. He switched on the torch and discovered a seat. He pushed his wife into it and sat down beside her.

"Grace, if you don't stop laughing, I—I shall tickle you."

Again she stuttered. "I—sh—shall never stop laughing. Oh, don't, Arthur. Oh, don't! I—"

And then Arthur Appleyard remembered the conversation that he and Struthers had had in the boat. He marveled. Was it possible that Grace had fractured her frozen girdle? Was it nothing but an incident, a ludicrous incident, and would her dignified refinement freeze up again?

He put his arm round her and insinuated fingers under the mackintosh.

"Oh, don't, Arthur!"

But he had a sudden strange feeling that she liked it. "By Jove, you've got a pretty laugh, Grace."

"Oh, don't be so silly."

"It's good to be silly—sometimes."

He kissed her, and to his astonishment she returned the kiss, not as Grace Appleyard, but almost like a romping girl.

He thought, "I suppose miracles do happen. She's lost her dignity catching old Struthers looking such a figure of fun. Perhaps she feels that she has got back at him. Blessed if I know."

But the miraculous interposition of Mr. Struthers' stoutness bulging in orange and purple was not evanescent. For the rest of the holiday Grace ceased to be distant and refined. She became friendly with the Strutherses. On one occasion her husband caught her giggling.

She made a confession. "Arthur, there was a time when I was in danger of taking Jack seriously. But when I saw him in that get-up, I realized—"

Mr. Appleyard nodded. "One shouldn't take things too seriously, Gracie. Yes, I understand. Let's go out and catch a bigger fish than the one Struthers got."

The Old Man Takes His Boy Back Home (Continued from page 69)

high seat suggested a man driving himself to his own funeral. But the trail of wondering gloom he left in his wake had nothing to do with the feelings of the man himself. There was a song in his heart as he drove ahead to join his boy.

It was a relief to Lem to find that when his strange conveyance once reached the crowded streets of the big city, no one seemed to inquire or care where it came from or where it was going. The shadows of the giant buildings wrapped Lem and Michael in a cloak of unimportance.

Lem had little trouble in finding an outdated stable, where he parked his battered funeral coach and tired horse. With his disreputable suitcase in his hand and most of his original fortune in his pocket, he made his way straight to the Rex Hotel.

There was a talkative clerk with a little mustache standing behind the counter when Lem entered. Lem had to wait for him to finish an excited phone conversation before he could get his attention.

"I would like to ask about a young fellow named John Smiley. He's—"

The talkative young man interrupted him. "Gee, that was certainly a tough break. They say he was liked by everybody around here, too."

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Lem, a little curious. "Isn't he here any more?"

"Oh, gee, I guess you haven't heard. It was in all the papers this morning. He was shot last night by a guy who tried to rob the till. Killed outright. They don't seem to be able to locate his people. He came from somewhere in the South. It was certainly a tough break for a nice guy like him. But I guess that's New York. What's the matter, mister? You look sort of bleary-eyed."

Lem wanted to scream. He wanted to sink through the floor. There was a double pounding—one in his head and another in his heart. But as he have observed before, he never could show his feelings about his boy in public.

"Where is he now?" he asked.

"Down at the morgue," answered the young man.

Lem found himself out in the street breathing as though there were not enough air to go round. His boy shot.

His boy dead. Odd things popped into his head. The small family plot in the Willsboro cemetery. Lucy was waiting there for him and John. He couldn't disappoint Lucy.

He found himself back at the stable where he had left Michael a few hours before. "Hitch him up again," he told the listless attendant. "Okay," was the answer without any further comment.

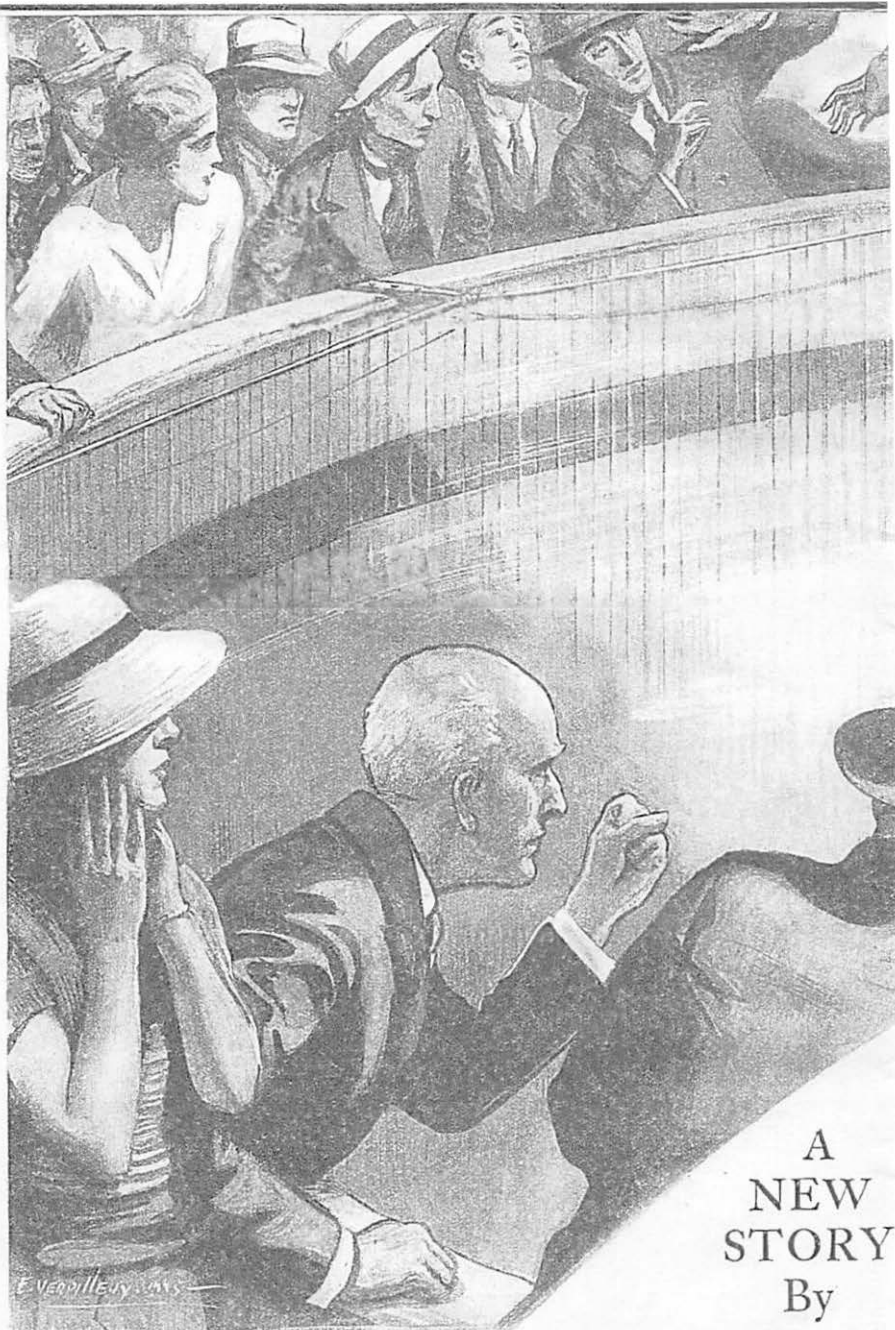
As Lem drove out into the street he stopped just long enough to ask a cop, "Where's the morgue?" When he found it he paid twenty-five dollars for a plain wooden box, placed it gently inside the wagon with the four drooping plumes and started to drive back to Willsboro.

The trip took over a month this time because Michael was very tired and Lem had to stop a day here and there to beg or earn a little food.

When he finally drove through Willsboro and pointed towards the cemetery with his precious burden, someone stopped and said, "Look. There's Lem Smiley back in town again. I knew they couldn't keep him out of business. He's too smart. He's got a customer."

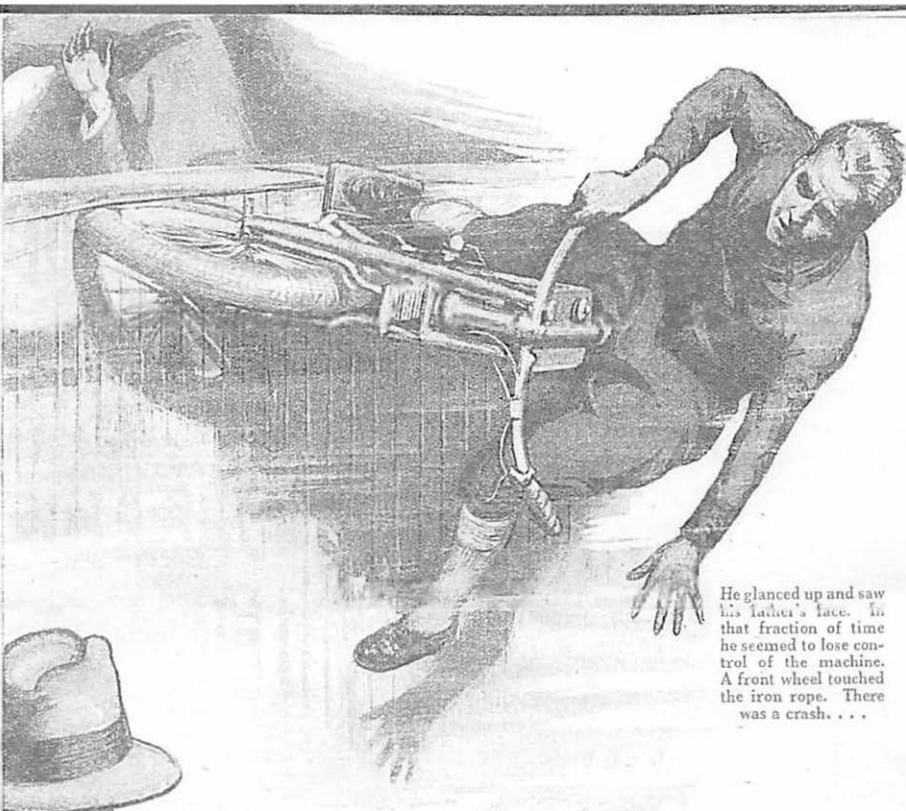
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Pearson's May
Jan 1937



A
NEW
STORY
By

WARWICK



He glanced up and saw his father's face. In that fraction of time he seemed to lose control of the machine. A front wheel touched the iron rope. There was a crash. . . .

THE WHEEL OF LIFE

IT was not flattering the Pym's to speak of them as stubborn people, and to say that, generation after generation, fathers and sons had quarrelled. A Pym had run away to sea in Captain Cook's day, and yet another Pym had gone off to fight for the Confederacy in the American Civil War and been shot through the head at Gettysburg. But when poor Mary Pym lay dying, and looked at her husband with those dim brown eyes of hers, John Pym knew what she yearned for.

"It's Guy?"

"I want to see Guy, John."

Young Guy had vanished more than two years ago, after a catastrophic quarrel with his father. Go into the woollen business; not he! His father might be a "warm" man,

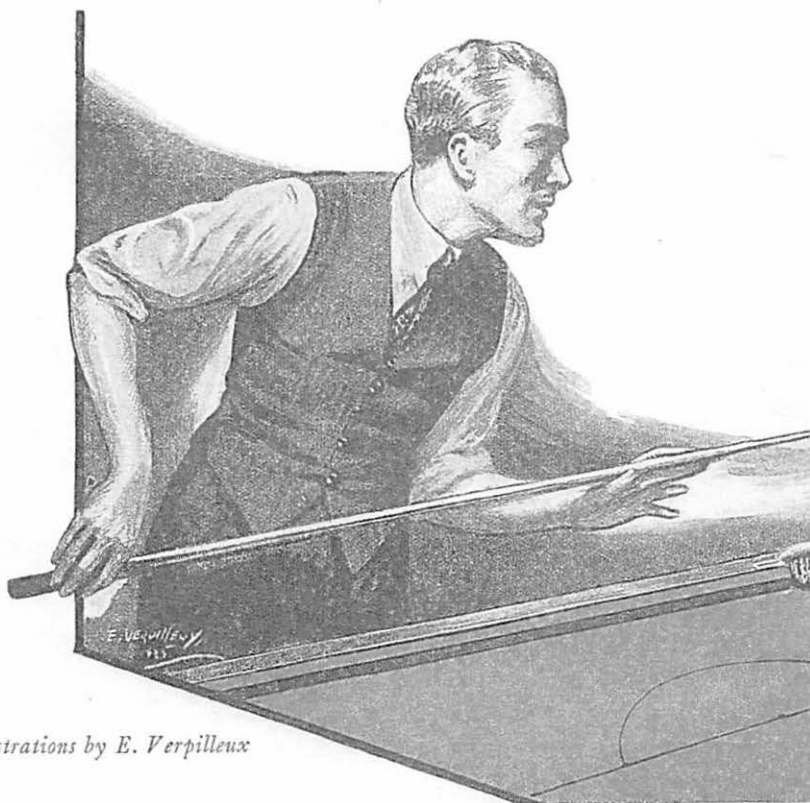
and the nest nicely feathered for Guy, but Guy had urges of his own. The young fool had disappeared into the world in the proper Pym fashion, and his father had refused to consider conciliation.

But with poor Mary dying, the business was otherwise, so an S O S was put out by the B.B.C. for Guy.

"Will Guy Pym, last heard of in London, go at once to No. 9 Enderby Road, Bradchester, where his mother is lying dangerously ill?"

A young man was playing billiards in an Islington public-house. He had fair hair, a determined and cheeky face, and as he bent over the table to make his shot, his eyes

DEEPING



Illustrations by E. Verpilleux

were set in a blue stare. Somewhere, probably in the private saloon, a wireless set was at full blast. His friend and opponent had gone in search of a drink, for when young Pym had the balls to his liking, he might be in play for ten minutes. Also, you could trust him not to cheat. But the other young man, coming back suddenly in his shirt-sleeves, with a glass of beer in one hand, spoilt young Pym's shot.

"I say, Guy, sorry, old man, but——"

"Dash it, you've made me foozle!"

"Sorry, but it's serious. An SOS for you on the wireless."

Young Pym turned quickly, with his cue poised.

"What?"

"Sorry, but it's true. Will Guy Pym go at once to No. 9 Enderby Road, Bradchester, where his mother is lying dangerously ill?"

Guy's blue eyes stared.

"You're joking."

"Believe me, I'm not."

Young Pym was in his shirt-sleeves. Very deliberately he went to put his cue away in the rack. His coat hung on a peg. He took it down and felt in the inner pocket for his wallet.

"I say, Harry."

"Short of cash?"

"I haven't the train fare on me. Lend me a quid."

Harry went for his own coat, and produced from it two pound notes.

"Better have two, old lad."

"Can you manage it?"

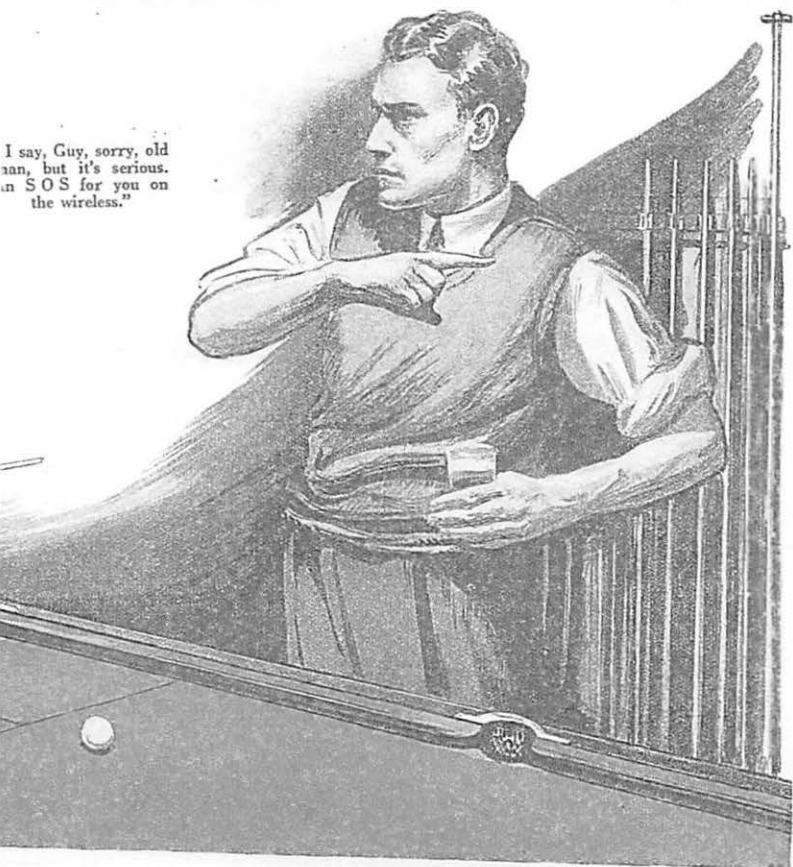
"Yes."

"You'll have them back all right."

"I'm not worrying," said Harry, which was true, for though Guy's credit might be backward, it was sure.

Young Pym put on his coat and hat, and

I say, Guy, sorry, old
man, but it's serious.
an SOS for you on
the wireless."



dashing out into Upper Street, managed to catch a strolling taxi. "St. Pancras station, and make it snappy." It had not occurred to him to go back to his bed-sitting-room in Lavender Street for a suitcase and belongings. He had five and sixpence on him in silver, and paying off the taximan, he ran into the booking-office.

"What's the next train for Bradchester?"

"Ten-three. You've got two minutes."

"Third single."

He caught the ten-three for Bradchester just before the whistle blew.

The train landed him in Bradchester soon after midnight. Trams and buses had ceased, and every taxi in the place appeared to have gone to bed. Enderby Road lay in the rich and residential part of the town, and Guy had a two-mile walk before him. But he did not walk, he ran. That was the Pym way, hot upon the impulse, yet with a

toughness that did not tire.

When Guy came to the familiar road, with its solid houses set among their trees, he dropped to a walk. He was conscious of a tense feeling over the heart, not merely from the running, but because emotion had been whipping him along. Poor old mater! What a selfish, recalcitrant young swine he had been! He had written to his mother once a month, giving no address, and not mentioning his father, but always he had felt rather guilty, after posting those letters. As for the quarrel with his father, it seemed to have happened absurdly in some dim and distant past.

No. 9 had a big beech tree growing by the gate, a tree that gave its name to the Pym habitation, Beech House. The tree was a mountain of shadow, not a leaf moving, and beyond and under its branches Guy saw three windows like yellow panels in the dark-

ness. He knew those three windows; they belonged to the big bedroom on the first floor and his father's dressing-room.

Beech House had an absurd and pompous flight of steps rising to its front door. Guy could remember tumbling down those steps as a small boy and being picked up by his mother. "Oh, my dear, have you hurt yourself?" He could remember her tender, frightened face. He was climbing those steps, feeling a little thickness in his throat. He rang the bell.

THERE was a pause. Then a light was switched on in the hall. The door opened, and he saw his father there, the same familiar, stocky figure with its large and baldish head. Pym senior was in dressing-gown and pyjamas, and his face had a sleepless look.

"Guy!"

"Yes, I got the S.O.S. Came at once, pater."

His father's hand went out.

"I'm glad. Come in. I'm afraid one of the nurses has your room."

"What's the news, pater?"

His father closed the door.

"Not very good, Guy. She's—she's dying. She wanted to see you, and you're just in time."

There was no awkwardness between them. They were just two men conscious of a mutual and impending sense of loss.

"I'm sorry, pater. I was a cad not to have come to her before, but one doesn't realise somehow—"

"That old people pass?"

"Yes, just that. One expects things to go on."

His father turned towards the stairs and began to climb them.

"Had any supper, Guy?"

"No."

"We can manage something presently."

"Not hungry, pater."

"I'll take you in to her at once. Just wait on the landing a moment."

Old Pym went into his wife's room and, closing the door, spoke to the night nurse, who was sitting by the window. "Leave us alone, Nurse, please." The girl came out on to the landing, glanced in surprise and with some curiosity at the young man standing there, and disappeared down the dim stairs. Guy heard a murmur of voices. He was watching the slip of light under the door, and feeling strangely like a child in this familiar house. His mother was dying. How wrong and how incredible! Somehow he had always regarded his parents as ageless creatures.

The door opened and his father came out. His hand rested for a moment on his son's arm.

"I've told her. Just five minutes. Yes, I'll leave you alone."

Guy was conscious of the pressure of his father's hand as he passed through the doorway, and then he was conscious of nothing but a face on the pillow, a face as frail as tissue paper, and a pair of eyes. The eyes were all lit up. He saw his mother smile.

"My dear, you've come back."

He bent down to kiss her, and as he did so something strange seemed to happen to his mother's face. The smile passed away like light cut off by shadow. His mother was dead.

Guy stood for some seconds with a face that was completely expressionless. Then, he bent down a second time and kissed his mother, and as he did so the child in him cried out in grievous anguish. He had meant to tell her everything, and she was gone into the ultimate and final silence, and yet he had known by her smile that he had been forgiven.

He found himself with wet eyes, fumbling for the door handle. His father, looking somehow small and obscure, was sitting on the stairs.

"She's gone, pater."

He was aware of his father rising slowly and almost ominously.

"Yes, and if you hadn't left us—"

"Pater!"

"It's the truth, my lad. She was never the same. You took something out of her life."

"Isn't that a pretty ghastly thing to say to me just now?"

"It's the truth, Guy."

"And was it all my fault?"

THE primordial Pym was up and out in both of them, smarting under the stress of violent emotion. That such a clash of tempers was both ridiculous and unforgivable was patent to them both, and yet in this moment of pain they tore and hurt each other. Neither would relent and give way, and both were weeping.

"If you can't listen to reason and the truth, you had better go."

John blubbered bitterly at his son.

"I'll be all alone now, without her. I wanted to be the last one to be with her. You've even taken that away from me."

Guy's face was the face of a young man who was dead.

"I think I'll go. There's nothing more for me here, is there?"

"Yes, you had better go."

Young Pym went down the stairs and out into the dark garden. He had been less than a quarter of an hour in that house of memories, and he was leaving it as he had left it more than two years ago, youth coldly raging. The old man was impossible. But how had it

happened, this unpardonable wrangle outside the door of the room where his mother lay dead? How beastly it was! But why had his father said those bitter things? Yes, snapped at him like a savage old dog! Well, this was the end of all things between father and son. Guy walked back to Bradchester Station and sat on a hard seat until 3 a.m., when a train came in and gathered him up.

AT Beech House his father was sitting beside his dead wife's bed, holding a hand that was growing cold. Poor Mary's face had the infinite serenity of death, but the peace of her passing could not communicate itself to her husband. He was feeling forlorn and stricken, and bitter. He was saying of his son, "For this I will never forgive him." That was what numberless Pym had said of each other, and on Mary Pym's face there seemed to linger the ghost of a smile.

So, Mary Pym was buried, and old John gave himself a little more fiercely to business and endured a rather crumpled sort of life in the big house. He did not marry his housekeeper or the cook or some young thing in the factory; he was not that sort of man. And between him and his son there was silence.

Time passed.

John's doctor said to him, "You ought to have a holiday."

Which was sound advice. Mr. Pym needed a tonic, not a mere drug in a bottle, but change, some new interest, less loneliness. Dr. Thomas might have prescribed a second marriage—some comfortable and kind person who would appreciate the comforts of Beech House; but Mr. Pym did not fancy encores. "Some strange woman fussing me! No, thank you." Mary had been a gentle creature, and in the feminine world gentleness appeared to be regarded like too much fidelity, as a vice.

John bought a bull-terrier, and began to interest himself a little gruffly in good works, a sure sign of senility. Perhaps he was developing a feeling of sympathy for lonely old people, and men who were starved of life, old age pensioners, derelicts who could not escape from the dole.

A holiday? Yes, not a bad idea, but where should he go? There was a sentimental side to the Pym, and John remembered Saxton-on-Sea, where some forty years ago he and Mary had spent their honeymoon. In those days Saxton had been a simple place, with nigger minstrels, donkeys, bathing-machines, and Chelsea buns. The new Saxton had three big hotels, a bathing-pool, thirty public tennis-courts, six cinemas, three miniature golf-courses, a fun fair, and one new church. Its waist-line had increased

from two to seven miles. It held beauty competitions.

John Pym arranged to go to Saxton. He booked a bed and private bathroom at the Regina Hotel. It was August, and undoubtedly John Pym should not have gone to Saxton-on-Sea in August, but sentiment prevailed. He found Saxton hiving with humanity, heat, hubbub, and bright young things who cultivated the nude and refinement. The beach was crowded with children, the parade and pier almost impassable, the hinterland ravaged with new red little houses. It was not as John Pym recalled it or wanted to recall it. He could remember bathing with Mary in an unsophisticated sea, and Mary had uttered little screams and bobbed up and down, and when he had proposed to teach her to swim, she had clung to him, "Oh, John, don't let me under." Modern Saxton did not cling. It jostled.

Mr. Pym had booked his room for a fortnight, but at the end of three days he was growing restive. The Regina Hotel stood on the sea front, and motor-cars and people were active until all hours in the morning. Mr. Pym decided to shorten his fortnight to a week and then to transfer himself to a place like London, where, if there was noise, it was pragmatical noise, and not the uproar of humanity upon its holiday.

It happened that on the last day but one of his sojourn in Saxton he was portering along the parade, when he came at the eastern end of it to Saxton's Fun Fair. In the old days there had been nothing here but a sea wall, and marshes and a little white coastguard station, but the fun fair had swallowed up all that dullness, and offered you every sort of physical sensation. It would make you sick or giddy, crash you about in miniature and ever-colliding motor-cars, or send you whirling round a revolving platform, or shoot you on your back down a spiral trough. Mr. Pym, feeling bored and lonely, strolled into the fair. Did the world still throw wooden balls at coco-nuts? It did. But John Pym was an old man chasing a memory, and recalling how on that very honeymoon he had displayed his prowess to Mary at a much less sophisticated show.

BEYOND the mechanical horses a strange structure attracted his attention, a contraction like a great wooden drum, covered with an awning. Steps ascended to an upper gallery, and on a platform below, a hard-bitten young man in riding breeches and a light-blue shirt was haranguing the crowd. This particular exhibit was called the Wheel of Life, because, as the showman explained, it was so deathly dangerous. The performers, mounted on motor-bicycles, rode round the perpendicular wall, and flouted death.

"If you want a thrill, ladies and gents, step up and see us do it."

Mr. Pym paid his sixpence and stepped up. He found himself with a score or so of other spectators, looking over a wooden barrier into the circular pit below. A steel cable protected the spectators above the top of the barrier. Mr. Pym saw a young man below, bending over a bright yellow motor-bike. The young man was wearing a red shirt and brown breeches and white stockings, and Mr. Pym stared. The back of the young man's head was poignantly familiar. A moment later Mr. Pym saw his face. The young man in the red shirt was his son.

Mr. Pym recoiled against the outer wall of the drum, and stood there feeling his heart beating fast and hard. A door slammed. A motor-bike filled the place with sudden detonations. The show was about to begin. People were leaning forward over the barrier. But Mr. Pym was conscious of feeling horribly afraid. So this was how his son earned his living, risking his neck in this awful wooden pit. Extraordinary coincidence! Meanwhile, the detonations of the motor-bike quickened to a deafening roar. The wooden structure began to quake.

People were craning their heads. Was it his son or the other fellow who was careering round that wooden wall? Mr. Pym could not see. He wanted to see and, like a man fascinated by the thing he feared, he approached the barrier.

His son was riding the machine. The thing roared round and round, swerving up and down, and, in its upward swerves, almost touching the wire rope. Nervous people recoiled. Mr. Pym stood there, gripped by a kind of dominating dread. Supposing—? And then the thing happened.

It was as though the father's stare penetrated the son's consciousness. He glanced up for a moment, saw his father's face, and in that fraction of time seemed to lose control of the machine. A front wheel touched the iron rope. There was a crash, sudden silence, and a circle of shocked faces looking at the crumpled figure below.

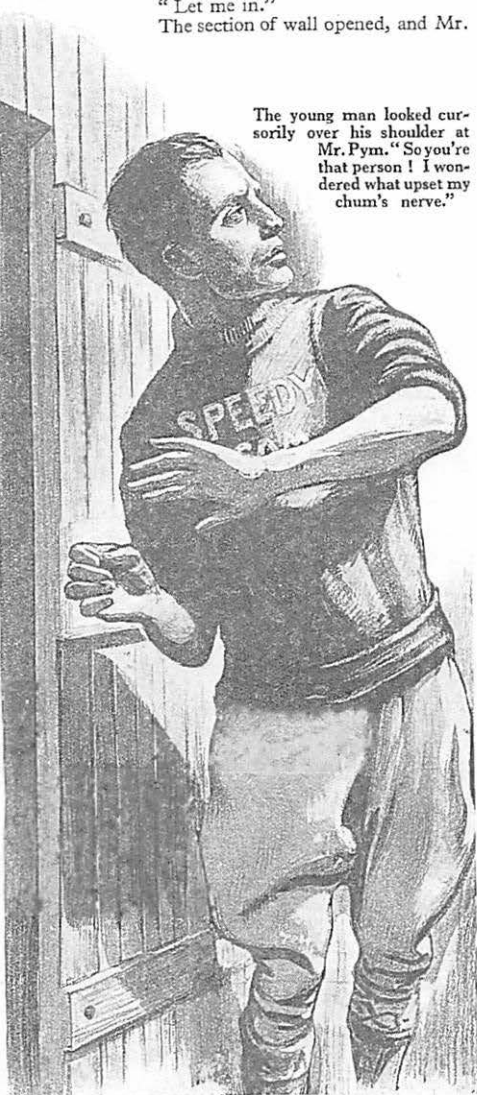
John Pym rushed down the steps to the platform. He had noticed that a small section

of the wooden wall was made to open and shut, but when he found this door it was locked on the inside. Mr. Pym hammered on it with his fists. He was quite beside himself, and remembering as he stood there shouting, "Let me in, let me in," that in the spirit his son's life had begun at Saxton-upon-Sea.

"Let me in."

The section of wall opened, and Mr.

The young man looked cursorily over his shoulder at Mr. Pym. "So you're that person! I wondered what upset my chum's nerve."



Pym saw the face of the other young man, very white and fierce.

"Here, get out of my way! What are you making all this row for?"

"I'm his father."

The young man looked fiercely and curiously over his shoulder at Mr. Pym.

"So you're that person! I wondered what upset my chum's nerve. I'm going to telephone."

He leapt from the platform and ran, and

Mr. Pym scrambled in and down into the wooden well. He was aware of a circle of shocked faces hanging up above, like masks on a wall, and of Guy lying flat on the floor with his face all bloody. Mr. Pym went down on his knees beside his son.

"It's the doctor," said someone.

"Lucky there was one about the place."

Then a couple of attendants in uniform appeared and cleared the gallery. Mr. Pym was holding his son's wrist and trying to decide whether he could feel any heart-beat. Guy's poor bloody face both fascinated and frightened him. Was Guy dead? If so, it was the sudden and strange appearance of the father that had distracted Guy's attention and caused the crash. He had killed his son.

But the young man in the green shirt was back in the wooden pit.

"A doctor's coming, and the ambulance."

Mr. Pym looked up into the young man's face.

"Is he dead?"

"Dead! Confound it, don't be such a Jonah!"

The young man bent down, unbuttoned Guy's shirt, and slipped a hand inside.

"No. Heart beating. He fell partly on his shoulder. I guess it would take a devil of a lot to kill Guy."

Mr. Pym's face was flushed.

"I suppose it isn't of much importance to you?"

The young man turned on him fiercely.

"What's that? Say it again. The best pal I ever had. Oh, yes, of course, you're his father. I almost forgot. Didn't understand him, did you? Hullo, here's the doctor!"

Mr. Pym stood meekly aside while the doctor examined his son. What would the verdict be? And why had his son's friend spoken to him so harshly? But the Pym anger had passed from John Pym. How ridiculous to be angry in a world where there was so much suffering and death!

"I'm his father, Doctor. Is he very badly injured?"

"Broken arm and collar-bone. I'm not sure about the rest. Be able to tell you later."

A couple of ambulance men were descending into the pit with a stretcher. The doctor took charge. He wanted three people to lift Guy, with one other supporting the unconscious man's back, while he took charge of the broken arm.

"Not sure about the spine."

Mr. Pym helped to place his son on the stretcher.

"Can I come in the ambulance, Doctor?"

"If you like. He will be in my hands. I happen to be the surgeon for the week."

"I'm a rich man, sir. If you want help, or a second opinion. Please don't misunderstand me."



"He is a medical student, sir, and mad keen. He had to live two lives, you see. He took on with me a couple of years ago. Pluck, yes, plenty. Learnt all the business in a couple of weeks. It's just a matter of nerve."

Mr. Pym wiped his forehead.

"**T**HANK you for telling me. So he has been keeping himself in this way, in order to do the thing that seemed big. Yes, I understand now. Rather fine of him, don't you think?"

"Damned fine!"

"Thank you, Mr.—"

"Brown. Sam Brown."

"One can only pray that one hasn't made

"Sam's been a great man to me."

"He has. But, look here, my son, do you think you can forget all the rest?"

"Can you, pater?"

"Of course. You're going to be a doctor."

"That's what Mother wanted, you know. It's a good business to be able to pull people out of trouble. Sounds awful slop, doesn't it?"

"Not to me now, my dear. I'll go no trumps on this doctoring business, if you'll let me."

"Will you, pater?"

"Rather."

A nurse, happening to look round the screen, saw two men holding hands.

The Doctor's Experiment

THEN insomnia became added to her troubles and she would lie awake at night silently, her eyes following us as we did our night rounds. Finding her thus one evening I decided to try and put her to sleep by suggestion. To my surprise she went off to sleep at once. Remembering that suggestions made during light sleep are supposed to be retained afterwards in the unconscious, I now suggested to her that she was getting better, that we cared for her and that she was going to be happy in the ward. She slept all that night and awoke next day in radiant spirits. Each night for five nights I repeated the experiment, and each night she fell into a deep sleep, not waking till the morning. . . . The most extraordinary part of the affair, however, was that she now began to get better quite rapidly. . . . Finally she was well enough to leave the hospital.

"*The Silver Fleece*," by Robert Collis (Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd.).

"We shall be able to judge that later."

When he had seen his son carried into the Saxton Hospital, John Pym returned to the Regina Hotel and explained to the management that he wished to retain his room. It had been assigned to other visitors, but the manager proved sympathetic, and was able to offer Mr. Pym other accommodation. Half an hour later Guy's father re-entered the Saxton Fun Fair, and making his way to the Wheel of Life, saw that a notice "Closed" had been fastened over the window of the little green ticket-office.

Behind the wooden building a motor-caravan was parked, and as Mr. Pym approached it, the man of whom he was in search appeared at the top of the caravan's steps. He had changed into a lounge suit and, to Mr. Pym, his face looked less fierce.

"Can you give me a minute?"

The young man nodded.

"Come in. I was just off to get the news about Guy."

Mr. Pym mounted the steps and, removing his hat, sat down on a cushioned bunk.

"I want you to tell me about my boy."

"What do you want to know?"

"Just how he came to——"

"Do you mean you don't know?"

a second terrible mess of one's son's life. That's how I feel about it."

The young man smiled at him.

"Guy's a tough nut, Mr. Pym. We'll hope for the best. My show's rather messed up for the rest of the season, but I shan't care about that if he pulls through."

Mr. Pym nodded at him.

"All my fault that, too. I'll make that good, Mr. Brown. Yes, I'd like to."

"Oh, I'm not worrying, sir. Very good of you."

"I'm the one who's worrying. Let's take that as settled. You gave my lad a chance. I didn't. So it's up to me."

BUT the Wheel of Life would continue to revolve. Mr. Pym spent most of his time sitting on a seat outside the Saxton Hospital waiting like a beggar for news. For two days it was ambiguous and distressing; but on the third day the cloud lifted. Guy was conscious and out of danger, and Mr. Pym was allowed to see his son.

"Hullo, pater!"

Mr. Pym sat down beside his son's bed. There was a screen round it.

"I've been a poor old fool, my dear. I'm sorry."

"You see, I don't remember anything."

Proofed *Stand May 1937*

OUT of the PAST

By *Warwick Deeping*

Illustrated by H. A. SEABRIGHT

THE porter at Mandeville Mansions touched his cap to the gentleman in the grey topper, beige waistcoat and tail coat, for so notable and debonair a figure suggested Ascot and a certain exquisite spaciousness of soul and of pocket.

"Mr. Mossdrop in, John?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then, let us ascend."

When Captain Hector Flaxman stepped into the lift, it seemed to shudder slightly under his weight. He was a very large person, with the air of your complete man about town, and a face that some irreverent clubman had described as resembling a handsome pink ham. His striped trousers, perfectly pressed, seemed supported by his clean white spats. He carried grey gloves and a malacca cane. To John the porter, always an optimist, Captain Flaxman suggested racing tips and promiscuous half-crowns.

The lift ascended.

"Ascot, sir?"

"Yes, John."

"Any luck with the geegees, sir?"

But Captain Flaxman was not in a communicative mood. He did not, as was sometimes his habit, close one sleepily insolent blue eye at John.

"Completely dud, my lad. Flat as flat fish."

"'Ard luck, sir."

The lift had arrived at Mr. Mossdrop's floor, and the porter opened the grill, and let Captain Flaxman out on to the landing.

Mr. James Mossdrop was known as a financier. He had promoted many companies, many of which were defunct, and in dying had profited the promoter. Captain Flaxman was admitted to Mr. Mossdrop's flat by his valet, a suave but melancholy fellow with a cynical, flat eye. "How's the great man, Soames?" The valet sniffed. "Mr. Mossdrop's got a cold, sir." Captain Flaxman knew Mr. Mossdrop's colds, especially those unseasonable July colds which coincided with cold feet.

Being a member of a syndicate which, with Mr. Mossdrop as producer, was staging a financial deal that was proving shadily recalcitrant, Captain Flaxman walked into his partner's flat carrying his grey topper like a member of the fashionable world attending some "Lovely's" wedding.

"Well, Jim, feeling catarrhal?"

Mr. Mossdrop was sitting in an armchair wrapped in a green silk dressing-gown. He was a surreptitious, poky-faced little man with hair like grey plush, a veritable crop of moss like his name. Raising a smelling-bottle to his nose he sniffed and peered petulantly at Flaxman.

"I am not feeling at all funny, Flaxman."

Obviously he was not. His voice snuffled. The large facetiousness of Flaxman was not at all seasonable.

"Done any business?"

Flaxman put his hat, cane and gloves on a chair, and sat down on a Chesterfield sofa.

"No luck. Her damned husband was there. Some blighter might have given him the tip."

Mr. Mossdrop sneezed.

"Damn it, do you mean to say——"

"The fellow was most rude to me, most disgustingly rude, and he had red hair."

"We have got to lift that extra three thousand from somewhere."

"Don't worry, James. I've had an idea."

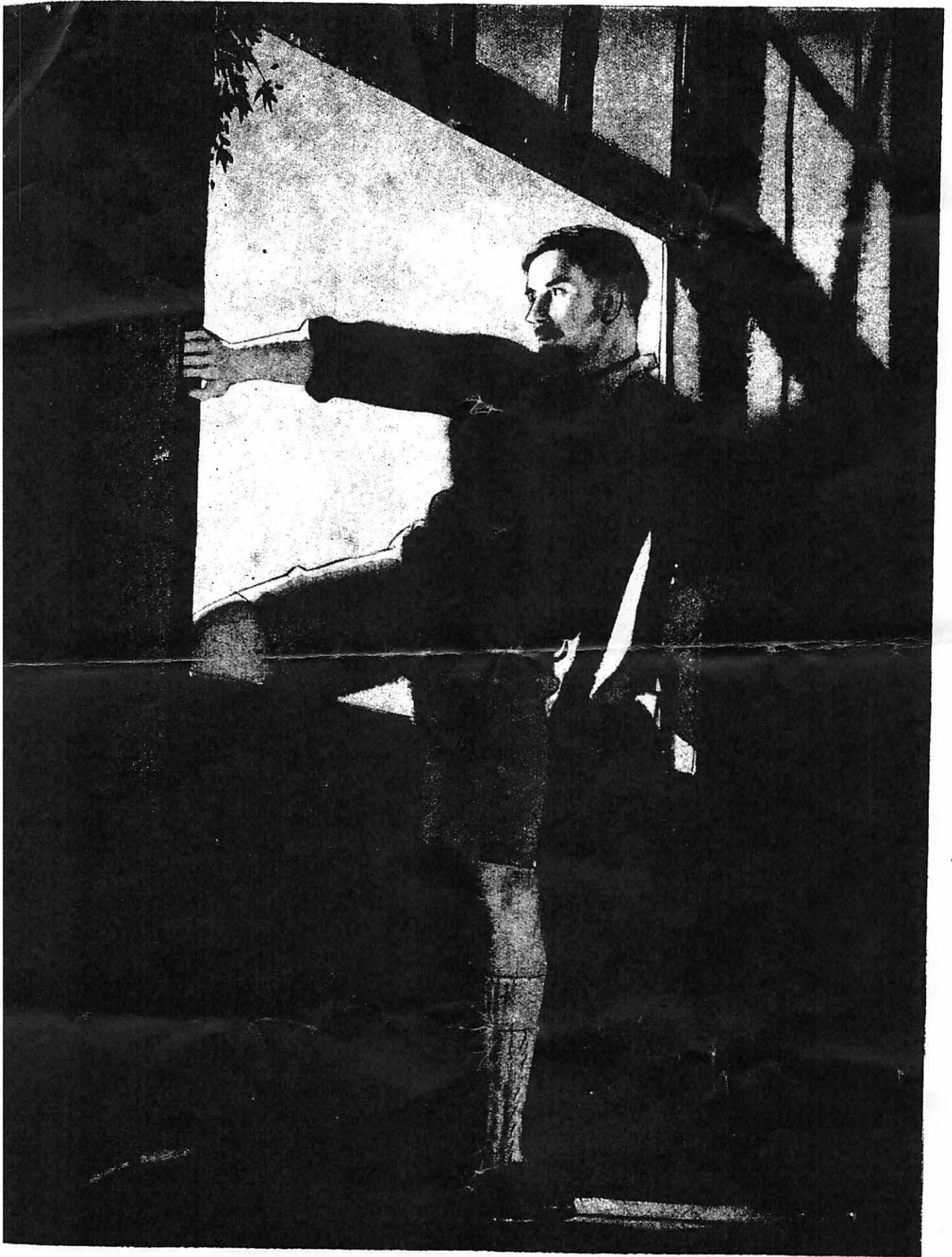
"Your ideas, my lad——"

"Yes, but this is a good egg. Hatched it myself. Lend me your car, James, to-morrow. Yes, driving myself."

"Where to?"

"Oh, down into the country. She goes every week to visit our dear infant at his prep. school. She drives herself down, no chauffeur. Regular as clockwork. I think I might cut in on her and do a little business. After all, James, I have been most magnanimous and self-effacing."

Mr. Mossdrop held the smelling-bottle to his nose. "Isn't that rather like blackmail, Flaxman?"



The blade of a knife inserted between the sashes forced back the catch. He raised the window and climbed in.

"My dear James, how crude! Surely I can persuade the very wealthy mother of my child to be interested in a promising financial proposition?"

"Well, keep me out of it."

"Of course, James, of course. But I can have the car?"

"All right. Take the damned car, but don't expect me to know anything about it."

A BLUE Rolls coupé drew up outside Messrs. Samson's office in Hanover Street. A policeman happened to be passing as the occupant of the car emerged, and she turned and spoke to him. "Can I park here, officer?"

She was a very fair creature with a face that was somehow familiar to the policeman, and her voice was douce and deliberate.

"How long for, madam?"

"Oh, about ten minutes."

"That will be all right, madam."

He stood to watch this rather exquisite creature enter the doorway of the estate agents. Who was she? Where had he seen her before? Her face seemed to suggest the screen, or a page in one of the fashionable papers. The policeman was as educated as his age, and the faces of the fashionable world were not wholly strange to him.

The lady of the blue car was being attended to by a clerk who had risen from his table.

"I have come about Hawksbury House."

"Yes, madam. Will you take a chair?"

"I see that you are advertising it for sale."

"Yes, madam."

"Can you let me have the details? I am going down into the country to-day, and I should like to look at the house."

The clerk produced a ledger and the necessary information. Hawksbury House was for sale by private treaty with some fifty acres of land, and the price was seven thousand pounds. Yes, a particular bargain. The house and grounds were unique. Caretakers? No, the house was empty at the moment. The keys could be obtained from Messrs. Todd and Lampeter of Melford. The lady demurred. Had Messrs. Samson no keys? Yes, as a matter of fact they had, but it was usual for Messrs. Todd and Lampeter to supply both keys and a representative.

Said the lady, "I prefer to look over the place alone."

"Quite, madam. Of course we can let you have our keys. And what name may I——?"

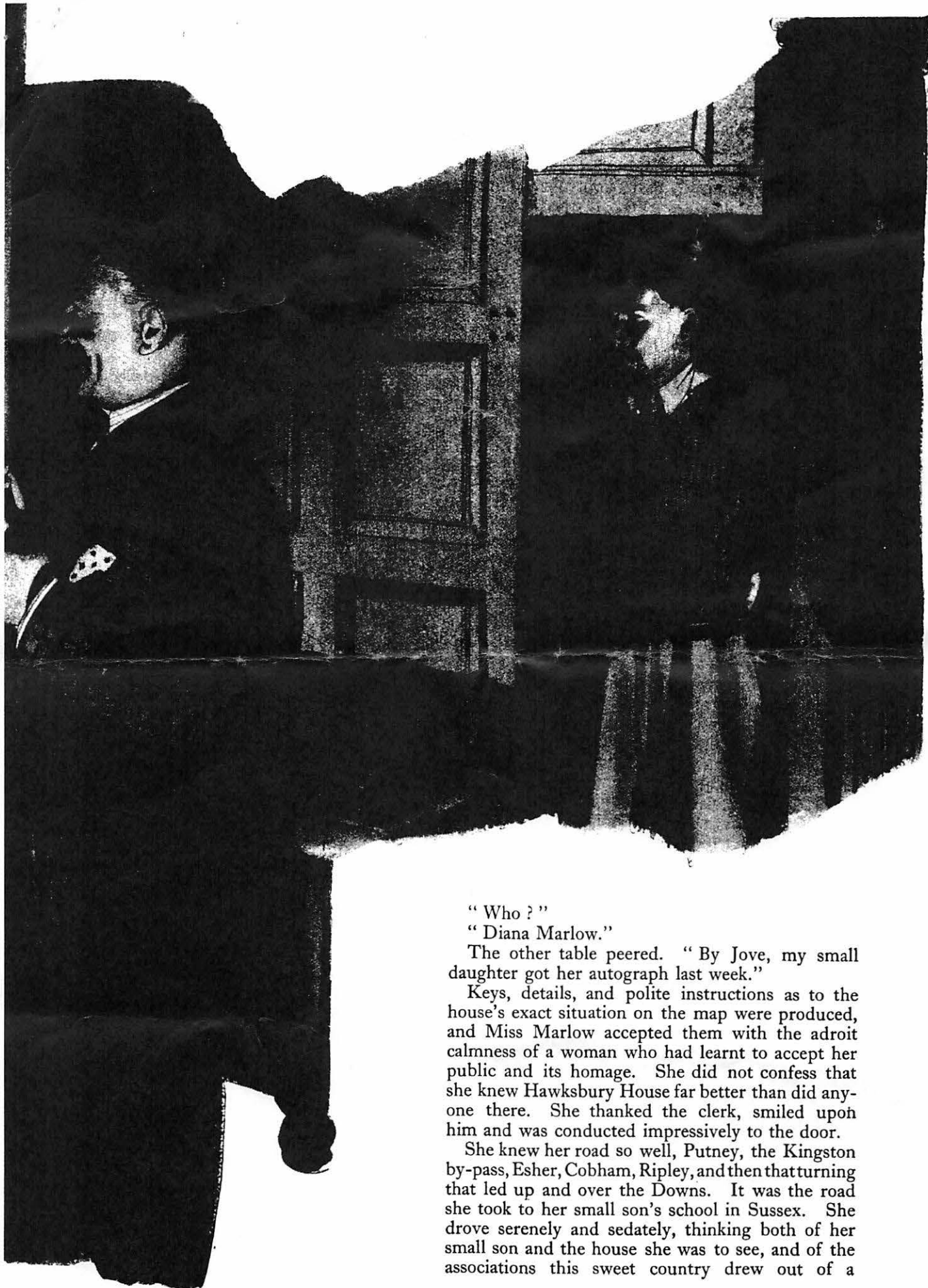
"Miss Diana Marlow."

He too, like the policeman, had been trying to place the lady. Obviously, he was impressed, thrilled. He excused himself and went to procure the keys, and in passing another table, bent down to whisper behind the lady's back.

"See who that is?"

Miss Marlow had her back to the window, and it was she who saw the oak panel slide and disclose the most unexpected figure.





"Who?"

"Diana Marlow."

The other table peered. "By Jove, my small daughter got her autograph last week."

Keys, details, and polite instructions as to the house's exact situation on the map were produced, and Miss Marlow accepted them with the adroit calmness of a woman who had learnt to accept her public and its homage. She did not confess that she knew Hawksbury House far better than did anyone there. She thanked the clerk, smiled upon him and was conducted impressively to the door.

She knew her road so well, Putney, the Kingston by-pass, Esher, Cobham, Ripley, and then that turning that led up and over the Downs. It was the road she took to her small son's school in Sussex. She drove serenely and sedately, thinking both of her small son and the house she was to see, and of the associations this sweet country drew out of a

poignant and passionate past. It would not have occurred to her to notice as she passed a particular chalk-pit that a black and red car was parked there with its nose towards the exit, like some predatory creature ready to dart out upon its prey.

The Delage pulled out and followed her. Its driver was satisfied that he knew which road the blue coupé would take. He, too, was familiar with this English landscape, and had planned to overtake and challenge the lady on a particular heathy upland where intimate conversation could be conducted with discretion. But on Billbury Hill her behaviour surprised him. He saw the blue car slow down, and turn to the right into a lane that snaked its way through the green gloom of high beechwoods.

Captain Flaxman exclaimed, "Damn it, why? She is taking the road to Hawksbury!"

It was about ten o'clock when the man came through the beechwoods to the southern slope of Billbury Hill. Half tramp, half hiker, in brown shorts and yellow pullover, he carried a pack on his back and a haversack slung at one side. His long legs were the colour of last year's beech leaves, his face burnt brown, and attached to his chin was a little peaked black beard. The poise of his head was gaillard and ironic. He flourished an ash stick like some stout beggar of Elizabethan days.

A grove of yew trees grouped like the pillars of a church turned an old trackway into a dark tunnel. The man with the black beard followed the track, until an arch of light framed the deep valley in a kind of Gothic window. He stood for a moment at gaze, head high, little glimmers of light in his eyes. The green world lay at his feet.

Very beautiful was this English valley with its high woods and meadows and its grassy uplands, feathered with fern. A little lake shone like a silver shield laid upon green velvet. Near it the high chimneys and red brick gables of an old house showed among the trees. Hawksbury! The face of the man with the black beard was like the face of a lover.

He went on and down into the valley, and over a stile into a lane. It was a quiet lane, and he met no one. Two rusty iron gates, hung upon stone pillars, showed through their bars a weedy drive. There was a chain and pin on the gates, but no padlock, and as the man with the beard opened them he thought "Poor old Geoff. Could not afford much paint before he died! Now, I wonder, am I to be lucky?"

What did he desire? That he should find the house empty? Trees had encroached upon the drive, and when he came past the great cedars to the open space before the house he saw all its windows like sightless eyes. No blinds, no curtains, though the lower windows had their white shutters closed. A moorhen called from the lake,

but that was the only sound he heard.

He stood and gazed at the house with a little wincing smile. Memories. The walking of a ghost! So, old houses and their people died! Well, he had come hundreds of miles to savour this moment, and to find in it a kind of inexorable sadness. Hawksbury was the symbol of an England that was passing. Such places had become superfluous, save perhaps as schools or country caravan-series, or homes for the feeble-minded.

The feeble-minded! Well, well! Old families who rotted at the top. And he had proposed and dreamed that he, the bad boy of the clan—!

HOW did one break into a locked and empty house? Oh, that would be easy. Had he not done it dozens of times as a wild kid? He walked round the house and into the service court, and found the same old window, and the same obliging and inefficient catch. The blade of a knife taken from his haversack, inserted between the sashes, forced back the catch. He raised the lower sash, climbed in, reclosed the window, and leaving pack, haversack and stick in a dark corner, became the ghost.

Drawing-room, library, dining-room, gun-room, faded paper and cracked paint. He climbed the oak stairs to the long gallery with its oak panelling and its white sashed windows. The sunlight lay in patches on the floor. There were paler spaces on the panelling where the family pictures had hung, some of them for two hundred years or more. All gone! Poor old Geoff must have broken rather badly, and sold the pictures before he died.

He climbed more stairs to the room which had been his in the old days, stood a moment, looked out of the window, gave a jerk of the head, and returned to the long gallery. He remembered a game of hide-and-seek one Christmas when he and Diana Marlow— Diana . . . Married to that comely cad, Flaxman. Did the priest's hiding-hole in which they had hidden still function? Diana had come forth with cobwebs in her hair. He walked to a particular piece of panelling, reached up and, putting his hand to a strip of moulding, pulled it forward. The thing slid forward on two oak pegs, revealing a round hole into which a finger could be slipped. He crooked a finger into the hole and pulled, and the panel slid downwards, revealing a narrow passage in the brickwork and the beginnings of a stair.

He had his head and shoulders in the opening when he heard that sound. A car. It was stopping outside the house. How damnably inconsiderate of the visitor! He crossed the gallery, put his face close to a window, and caught a fleeting glimpse of a woman's figure as she disappeared from his field of vision. Someone visiting the house. He heard a key turned below, a door opening, footsteps. Well, he did not wish to be

surprised here by some stranger, and tiptoeing back to the open panel he slipped inside, raised the panel, and putting his hands to the two oak pegs drew the moulding back into its place.

And then he remembered that he had left his pack and haversack and stick in the pantry. Would the woman explore the pantry? Was the feminine mind interested in pantries? Most probably it was. Footsteps on the stairs. He heard them faintly echoing in the great empty house. They reached the long gallery, paused, and then went to and fro for a while, almost like the footsteps of someone following the thread of memory in a familiar place.

Who was the visitor? Just some casual and possible purchaser who had come to inspect the house?

He had his head close to the sliding panel. What was that sound? Another car arriving. Oh, well, probably she had arranged to meet the agent here, or her own surveyor. And then he heard her footsteps go quickly and with a suggestion of alarm across the oak floor of the gallery. She was opening a window; he could distinguish the rubbing of wood against wood, and the rasp of the old weights and their cords.

Other footsteps on the stairs, heavy, deliberate, and obviously a man's. Some professional person? One could expect him to say "Good morning, madam; I'm afraid I am a little late." But no. The man behind the panelling heard her voice exclaim sharply. Almost it was like a startled hand thrusting something off.

"You!"

The other, unseen person laughed.

"Well, well, quite like old times. And how is my dear Diana?"

"What are you doing here, Hector?"

"Having a day in the country. Funny coincidence this, that we should have both——"

She caught him up.

"Coincidence. You have been following me. I object to being followed."

"Now, now, Di, we have had so many rows in our time——"

"Will you please get out?"

"My dear, how abrupt you are. Thanks to this happy coincidence we can discuss a certain little affair. As a matter of fact I was going to call on you."

The man behind the panelling was listening, with a little fierce smile on his face. He may not have been conscious of it, but his right fist was clenched. Here was he, a secret ghost, listening to these two voices out of the past and finding them alive and poignant.

He heard the woman say, "What do you want with me?"

"Your autograph, Di. Surely, the autograph of so distinguished a star——"

"Are we to indulge in sarcasm?"

"Surely, it is the privilege of one of our most popular actresses and film stars to indulge in what she pleases. You must be a very wealthy woman, my dear."

"You think so?"

"I do. The fact is, I want your autograph, Di."

"On a cheque?"

"Exactly. We will call it a loan, my dear. I happen to need it."

"How much?"

"A mere trifle; three thousand pounds."

There was silence for a second or two, and then, the man behind the panelling heard her say:

"When I divorced you, and bribed you, yes, it was a bribe, to keep away from my life and my son's, you promised——"

"Yes, my dear, but circumstances change. I need this loan. If I get it, I can make good. You shall have the money back."

"And if not?"

"My dear, I sometimes feel a very human desire to see our son. It is a pleasant prep. school, that. Why should a youngster grow up believing his poor father to be dead? Have a heart, my dear."

She answered him instantly. "So, you are just what you always were, a blackmailing cad."

He laughed.

"I shouldn't put it quite so crudely, Di."

"Can one put it too crudely to you? Do you know, there is one thing in my life that always amazes me, how I came to marry you."

"Yes, and if I may say so, you were quite keen on me."

"Beast! I cannot have been quite sane. I suppose unhappy people are not quite sane."

"The old, old story, Jack who didn't kill the giant. Well, I have never been in the dock, my dear, as our Jack was. One of the men who had to disappear. Died of bad liquor, perhaps, in the U.S.A. or Mexico, or the South Sea Islands."

"What a cad you are."

"No, just a poor, blundering, necessitous male. Funny thing, life. Redmayne won the M.C., and a little cell in quod. You became a dramatic star, and I a sort of punter to woolly financiers. Well, what about your charming signature?"

"You won't have it."

"In that case I must resurrect, and introduce myself to Christopher. I might even do it to-day."

"You can't do that, Hector."

"Why not?"

"You gave me your word."

"But I signed no contract. You ought to know all about contracts, Di. How much a night do they pay you?"

"I refuse to be blackmailed."

"Blackmail! No witness, my dear, in this empty old house. My word is as good as yours."

MISS MARLOW had her back to the window, and it was she who saw the oak panel slide open and disclose that most unexpected figure. Miss Marlow might be accustomed to dramatic moments on the stage, but here was an occasion that could be described as utterly bad art, sheer dastardly melodrama. If she lost some of her colour, and stood and stared at this apparition, Captain Flaxman could ascribe her air of emotional distress to a faltering of her courage. Meanwhile, the man with the black beard made a sign to her. He stood in the dark frame of his little sentry-box, enjoying his dramatic moment.

Captain Flaxman, jocund and facetious and unsuspecting, held out a fountain-pen.

"I can provide the instrument, my dear. Probably you carry a cheque-book in your bag."

The man with the black beard smiled at her, and nodded. "Wait a moment, Flaxman. There happens to be a ghost."

Flaxman swung round like some big beast caught in an ambush. His handsome ham of a face seemed to change from pink to purple.

"Who the devil are you?"

"Don't you know me, Flaxman? The man who should have died of drink in Mexico, the South Sea Islands or the U.S.A."

"Jack Redmayne."

"Redivivus."

Flaxman had slipped his pen back into a waistcoat pocket. His jocund blandness crumpled. He was looking ugly, rather like some big, flash bookie ready to fight his way out of a hostile crowd.

"Well, I don't suppose anybody wants a scandal, you least of all, Redmayne."

The man with the little black beard smiled at him.

"Miss Marlow, have I your permission to kick this fellow downstairs?"

Now, a man may be both a bully and a coward, and yet not be willing to be booted downstairs under the eyes of a particular woman. Moreover, Flaxman was a big beast, if flabby, and he had a reputation as a man who could use his fists and be dangerous in a dog-fight. He walked up to Redmayne and glared at him.

"The old Adelphi touch, what? The return of the village hero! Don't talk that sort of tosh, Redmayne."

Redmayne's elbows and shoulders were pressed against the panelling. Someone in the U.S.A. had taught him to swing. The blow was so sudden and swift, and the timing so perfect that it made instant contact with Flaxman's chin. He went down on his back and lay there.

Miss Marlow rushed up to Redmayne.

"Oh, Jack! He'll get up and—"

He caught her hands.

"Oh no, he won't. And if he does I'll give him another. He's flabby and yellow. I'm sorry, dear,

to be working the village hero stunt on your late husband."

She stood and looked at Captain Flaxman.

"You shouldn't have gone away, Jack."

"Had to. Couldn't mess up two lives. It wasn't my fault, really, but when justice, so called, gets you in Queer Street—! Hallo, he's coming round."

Flaxman's eyes were open. He looked rather like a big, bewildered baby. He became aware of those two watching him, and he got deliberately and ponderously to his feet, felt his collar and his chin, and glared.

"You'll pay for this, Redmayne."

"Don't be silly, man. There's no serious villain in the piece. Get out and stay out, or we'll have you for blackmail."

They stood at an open window and watched Flaxman clamber into his car. It was one of those cars with a low, streamlined body, and his bulk did not insert itself with dignity or ease. A large posterior stuck out rather like the hindquarters of Behemoth.

"Exit elephas."

The black and red car drove off, and the two live ghosts were holding hands.

"A question, Di. Any idea of buying this old place?"

She was looking at the pool.

"Yes, I want peace."

"My idea, too. I mean buying the place. Yes, it may sound funny, but I am quite a nabob. Someone was kind to me over there, seemed to like me, for some strange reason. Ever heard of Mimosa Beach?"

"No."

"An exotic place on the Pacific. My friend and I speculated in real estate. It came off. Well, who is going to buy this old place, you or I?"

She turned and smiled at him.

"It's yours, by right, Jack."

"Think so?"

"I do."

"Peace, my dear, and this old English landscape. But I suppose a coruscating star like Diana Marlow could not be expected—"

She sighed.

"One may get rather tired of coruscating, Jack."

"Is that possible?"

"That rather depends upon what a woman asks for, a life that is all headlines and floodlighting, or—"

"Peace?"

"The chance to be one's self."

He slipped an arm through hers.

"The most difficult thing in the world, my dear. But difficult things are interesting. I don't think you are as vain as I am. Suppose we try? By the way, do you object to my beard?"

"I object to nothing, brother ghost."

proof

34

Three Fools

Warwick Deeping

Liberty Magazine November 1, 1930



Three Fools

*He came formally,
a little diffidently,
and sat in her
salon.*

A Story of Love's Last Laugh

By



WARWICK DEEPING

Englishman, physician (for one year, in his youth), soldier in Gallipoli, Egypt, and France, and author of many novels, including "Sorrell and Son" and "Doomsday."

Pictures by LESLIE BENSON

(Reading time: 22 min. 37 sec.)

HE had one of those hard and narrow faces of which the cheeks are as flat as two boards, a beak of a nose, and a mouth that was almost lipless. Energy, ruthlessness, rectitude.

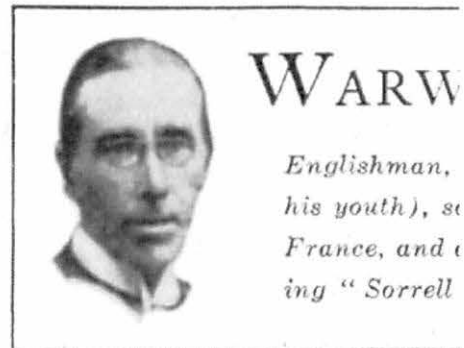
The reception clerk of the Hotel Savoia, bowing, washed his fat hands in invisible soap.

"Yes, sir. The rooms are ready, sir. May I hope you had a good journey, sir?"

The elderly Englishman glanced at him as an eagle might look at a chick.

"Have my luggage taken upstairs."

He was that sort of man, abrupt, authoritative. He



*Englishman,
his youth), se
France, and
ing "Sorrell*

Pictures by L

— By —
ICK DEEPING

*physician (for one year, in
dier in Gallipoli, Egypt, and
thor of many novels, includ-
nd Son" and "Doomsday."*

SLIE BENSON

looked at the world through eyes of frosted glass. Even when climbing a flight of stairs he had the air of calculating how much carpet had been needed to cover them. The lift waited for him, but as he was about to enter it another passenger appeared, a woman, youngish, very much *à la mode*, and smelling of some French scent.

He stepped aside to let her enter, and she smiled upon him.

She had a very noticeable smile, jocund, oblique, humorous; brown eyes and white teeth. Undoubtedly her nose was too broad and her mouth too capacious, but

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]

[THREE FOOLS
[Continued from page seven]]

there was about her something that attracted, a vitality, mischief, white skin and red lips.

"Just arrived? Well, the weather's exquisite."

The man stared at her and became aloof. He was not accustomed to being addressed by strange women, and with such frankness.

He said, "I never notice the weather."

"How nice to be like that!"

She gave him yet another oblique and jocund glance as the elevator stopped at the first floor and he got out. Yes, obviously he would belong to the first floor; he would occupy a suite; his hard head was imperial. The lift carried her on to the third floor. She entered her room humming one of Schubert's songs, and suddenly she began to laugh.

"How funny! The English in Italy. Some English. And he doesn't notice the weather."

A very suave floor waiter presented the usual document to the man of the flat cheeks.

"I am sorry, sir. It ees necessary."

The man sat down, produced a fountain pen, and with an air of disdain completed the details. He recorded himself as Sir Matthew Irons—Bart. His age was sixty-one. He had the air of regarding the inquisition as impertinent and superfluous. The name of Irons went all over the world. It carried Birmingham to Bokhara and Batum.

Mrs. Carteret, the lady of the jocund smile, saw him again at dinner. One of the masterful men, a chief, a money king—yes, obviously. But what was he doing in Italy when the weather did not matter to him and the blue of the sea had no kinship with the gray northerliness of his eyes?

Mrs. Carteret was a widow, unencumbered, somewhat adventurous. She looked rapid, and was more romantic than her smile. She enjoyed life so far as a very limited income allowed her to enjoy it, and perhaps she enjoyed it all the more because of her financial limitations. She had discovered both the fool and the greedy child in man. Her conversation suggested that she had no illusions, yet the woman who is incapable of creating new illusions does not exist.

Standing on her little balcony next morning she saw below her Sir Matthew getting into a carriage. He was going to Portofino, that most exquisite crevice on the coast, but he was not visiting it for its beauty. Sir Matthew had a son living at Portofino, an only son, Osbert Irons. Osbert was the son of his mother who had died fifteen years ago, and though the baronet had made every effort to brand Osbert with the Irons' trade-mark, the young man had disappointed his father.

Sir Matthew was obliged to leave the carriage where the coast road ended in the steep way going down into the little town. He walked across the piazza and up the path past the church. Italian women, sitting at their doors to sell lace, looked at his granite face and refrained. He climbed toward the headland where the green of cypresses and pines divided the turquoise of the sea.

THE baronet came to a gate in a hedge. It was locked, and he rang the bell. A middle-aged Italian woman with two moles on her face came to open it.

He walked through and past her. He had no Italian, and he would not have used it had he been a master of that language. A winding path went down to a little white villa with a terrace overhanging the wash of the sea. On the terrace a young man wearing nothing but a taffeta shirt and white flannel trousers lay in a deck chair, reading.

Young Irons got out of his chair.

"Hallo, pater!"

But there was no warmth in the welcome. He was a long and a loosely made young man with a sensuous mouth and whimsical blue eyes. He had repeated his mother both in the flesh and in the spirit.

Sir Matthew observed his son's loafing attire. He sat down in the chair which his son had vacated. He extracted a cigar from the breast pocket of his coat, bit off the end, and lit it. As yet he had not uttered a word.

Osbert balanced himself on the balustrade, his feet dangling in white canvas tennis shoes. He knew what the occasion portended. The same old squabble, the same old exhortations. He had never been able to feel sorry for his father, perhaps because the father was so disappointed in the son. Sir Matthew spoke:

"Glad to see you have shaved. That is something."

Osbert swung his legs. So that was the mood of the morning. Birmingham rushing out on the Rome Express to chastise him with steel rods.

"Well—yes, pater, that—is—something. And so is a shirt with a loose collar. I like life unbuttoned."

HIS father observed him. Frivolous young waster, scribbling poetry and dabbling in water colors, and loafing through life with his collar undone. And all because a damned fool of a woman had left him a thousand a year.

He spoke with sarcasm:

"Yes, I see you retain the same ideas. If you heard what other men said of you."

"What men?"

"In Birmingham."

Osbert smiled. His eyes were whimsical.

"But I have tried to convince you that I am not Birmingham, though Birmingham is a most excellent city. Supposing you were to ask some of the women—"

Any such suggestion was particularly exasperating to old Irons.

"Exactly. You're an effeminate fool. You ought to have been a girl."

"I am a bit of a woman, you know, pater. In some of us the sexes are mixed. I'm fifty per cent female. You, of course, are a hundred per cent male. That's what makes it—"

Sir Matthew cut him short:

"Precisely. I am Irons. My father was Irons and so was my grandfather."

"Fire irons, pater."

"While you—well, what are you? Sugar and water. A dabbler, a loafer, a fellow not fit to be an office boy. And yet you've got brains, plenty. But no character, no guts. I have given you every chance. I wanted an Irons to carry on after me."



She happened to sit by him.



She happened to sit by him.



They conversed, and she talked a great deal of frank and sophisticated nonsense.

Said the son: "Might I suggest that you marry again, and attempt to produce the proper and characteristic Irons?"

His father flashed a gray glance at him.

"Facetious, are you! Well, look here: I've come down to give you a last chance. I don't want my son's name to be a byword in Birmingham. I'm pretty proud. Now, either you come back to England and buckle to, or I'll cut you off."

Osbert looked at the blue sky above the pines.

"Well, that's final. I suppose you can't understand a man chucking half a million, or whatever it may be. Life is being yourself, pater, for you and for me. I'm going to be myself. I'm sorry, but that's all I have to say."

Old Irons threw his cigar over the balustrade into the sea.

"A washout. You young fool!"

Sir Matthew drove back to Santa Margherita and the Hotel Savoia, but he did not take the next fast train back

to Paris. He delayed his departure, not because of the sunlight and the sea, but because he—of all men—loathed obstruction and defeat. Life had obeyed him. Moreover, he was enraged by the futility of his son's pose. He was convinced that it was a pose that would not be permanent, and that the day would come when Osbert's eyes would open to the magnificence of money and the power that money conferred. He would wish to cease fooling and become Irons.

For Sir Matthew could not conceive of any other intelligent state than that of Irons. Energy, ruthlessness, rectitude.

He spent the day wandering rather disdainfully about Santa Margherita. He dined. He was aware of young Mrs. Carteret floating past him in a saffron-colored frock. That evening they danced at the Hotel Savoia. Mrs. Carteret danced, and very gracefully and with an air of making mischief among the men. Mostly they were elderly. Sir Matthew sat and watched her. His views upon women

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]

[THREE FOOLS
[Continued from page nine]

were as definite and rigid as his views upon commerce.

Yes, she was that sort of woman, a bit of an adventuress—probably quite capable of appreciating the value of money.

She happened to come and sit by him. She smiled upon him.

“Don’t you dance?”

Now, was it likely? But he did not snub her. A sudden and almost fantastic idea had found its way into his hard head. He was exploring woman as a financial persuader, a petard, dynamite. They conversed.

She amused him. She talked a great deal of frank and sophisticated nonsense. Possibly she tried to shock him a little, not realizing that old Irons’ dynamic plan demanded a woman whose morals might be shocking.

He invited her to the Savoia’s American bar and gave her little drinks. He satisfied himself with a brandy and soda. He allowed her to be inquisitive.

“No, I’m down here on business. My name is Irons.”

She had a sense of the dramatic.

“Not—the—Irons? Sir Matthew Irons?”

“Yes.”

“How thrilling! Why—you are a household word!”

The ice of him glittered. He was pleased.

“Yes—I may say we travel everywhere.”

“Of course you do. How fascinating and absorbing it must be! Big business, finance.”



She might appear a little too ecstatic, but Sir Matthew forgave her her enthusiasm. He approved it. Here was the sort of woman who understood the significance of success. He sipped his brandy and observed her shrewdly.

"Most absorbing thing in the world. Thinking in millions."

"And are you doing it down here?"

He gave her a little frosty smile.

"I am trying to persuade someone else to do it."

He would advance no further for the moment, and she digressed and began to talk about herself. She chattered with a lively candor. Sir Matthew learned that she was a widow with no children and a very limited income, and that she felt her limitations. She said that irresponsible drifting was beginning to bore her and that she was aching for some sort of job.

"I'm ambitious, you know. I'd simply love to be in the big things."

Sir Matthew had no doubt but that she would. Spending much money. Yes, he gathered that she was that sort of woman. But it was growing late, and he was regular in his habits. He went to bed, and lay reflecting upon the situation. He had done business with all sorts and conditions of people, and it seemed to him that he might do business with a lively and fascinating young widow. She would know how the bread was buttered. Oh, yes, she was sharp enough. Supposing you let Eve loose upon Adam?

BEING an Irons of the old order, he was thorough. He went again to Portofino, but not to see his son. He sat on the hotel terrace and talked to Kitty Carteret. He explored her; he catalogued her. He extracted from her information that would enable him, if necessary, to trace her antecedents and to have her and her reputation discreetly investigated. More and more was he inclined to use her. On the third day he dropped a hint:

"My business down here is a son."

Her inward gaze began to narrow.

"For his health?"

"Physically, he is in perfect health. It is a question of mental outlook. I am sorry to say my son has the mind of a loafer. No ambition, no drive. It is a great trouble to me."

She allowed him sympathy.

"It would be. Is it—that he is not interested?"

"He prefers to scribble poems and to loaf in the sun. I have tried to rouse his ambition and his pride. I have no use for a slacker, especially as my son."

"An only son?"

"Yes."

"How very—hard—for you, Sir Matthew!"

As a business man old Irons knew that risks have to be taken and that the running of the biggest risk may produce the most phenomenal return. It appeared to him that he was faced with a dead loss in the person of his

son and that a gamble might be justified. His problem was to extract Osbert from that villa at Portofino and provide him with experiences that might teach him the value of money, to so work upon him that he might begin to desire much money, and so become moved to make it. An incentive, a temptation.



DIPLOMACY? He allowed himself a frosty chuckle. This was a business affair, and therefore his rectitude would have to shut one eye. And, after all, it was for the boy's ultimate benefit.

He approached Mrs. Carteret. He did not attempt sentiment. Very wisely he dealt in hard cash.

"Have you any desire to make a thousand pounds?"

What a question to ask!

"A thousand pounds! But how? Are you going to give me a tip? Stocks and shares?"

"No. You could earn it."

"Oh, do tell me!"

He looked at her shrewdly.

"Perhaps you will be insulted."

"How could I be? Not by you."

"Then—I take it you are a woman of the world."

"Well, yes—in a way."

What was the old rascal meditating? She looked wise.

"Do tell me!"

"I want someone to teach my son a lesson."

"A lesson?"

"Yes. I want someone to teach him the value of money, teach him to want money. A woman could do it, especially a fascinating woman."

He watched her. Was she going to pretend that he was suggesting an outrageous thing, or was she the sort of woman he imagined such a woman to be? He moistened his thin lips.

"Shall I explain? Well, there is a villa vacant next to my son's. I might propose to take it and furnish it for a season and present it to my agent, who, of course, would undertake—"

She looked him squarely in the face.

"You mean—me?"

He nodded.

"Your idea is that I should get to know your son, and disgust him with poetry and seclusion?"

"Not—disgust him."

"Inspire him—with the desire to make money?"

"Exactly."

"By persuading him to spend much money?"

"Precisely so. A little subtlety, obstruction at the right moment. So that he should realize suddenly that without money—"

There was a pause. For the moment she did not know whether she was going to laugh or turn and rend him. Ingenious, cynical old scoundrel! But what a proposition!

She said: "And supposing your son showed an inclination to marry me?"

He nodded.

"The decision would rest with me."

"You mean—that you would keep the key of the safe?"

"Exactly."

She took a day to think it over, and then she accepted the proposition—upon terms: "I want to see your son before I decide." Sir Matthew explained to her that any suggestion of collusion would destroy the romance, and she said, "Of course, but I suppose you could ask your son to lunch here and I should be in the background."

Old Irons agreed. He telephoned to Osbert and indulged in a few harmless inexactitudes. He said that the weather had persuaded him to remain for a few days at Santa Margherita, but that he was returning to England immediately, and would Osbert come to lunch? Young Irons had a nice nature. His father had called him a fool on so many occasions that he could overlook the last occasion, and he walked over to lunch. He wore a tie, and Mrs. Carteret beheld him and listened to his voice and was satisfied.

She accepted the adventure. Instructed by Sir Matthew she proceeded to take and furnish the villa next to Osbert's. Old Irons had written her check for immediate expenses and had proceeded on his way to England. He warned her to keep in touch with him, and she supposed that he was the sort of man who would employ some person to observe her behavior. She visited the Villa Violetta and, looking over its garden wall, realized how near was the neighborliness, for she could see Mr. Osbert sitting on his terrace with a book.

She went to Genoa and bought furniture. She engaged two Italian servants. Within a fortnight she was in occupation of the villa, while Old Irons was saying to

himself that a woman can always be got rid of when money is plentiful.

Incidentally, Kitty Carteret hired a piano. She had a beautiful contralto voice and it had been well trained. With windows open wide and the sun pouring in she sang.

Young Irons, scribbling on the terrace after a dip in the sea before his coffee and rolls, forgot his inspiration and listened. He was astonished, curious. By gemini, what a voice! He had heard that someone had taken the villa next to his, and he had been annoyed.

But this voice? It sang Schubert, and suddenly it ceased. Oh, wise bird, elusive and wayward!

Mrs. Carteret had a window that overlooked Osbert's terrace and the loggia with its vines and roses. Each morning after her burst of song she went to that window and looked out from behind a curtain.

She discovered in her neighbor a significant restlessness. She discovered him walking up and down the terrace. He looked up at her villa. His face was the face of an expectant and perturbed child.

She began to sing a little in the evening, and suddenly ceasing she went up to that window. She caught him with



THE young people were bathing together; they wandered about the cliffs together; they sang together.

his head over the wall. He did not realize that he had been seen.

Each morning he swam. Both the villas had little stairways going down to a tiny bay which they shared. She decided to share it in person before he should scale her wall, but she did not go down dressed for the sea. She knew that nothing can be so unsexed as a woman in a bathing dress. She

wore amber, and sat on a rock in the sun and waited. He came back from his swim. He emerged in his dark blue dress. He saw her and put the wet hair out of his eyes. He stared, but without rudeness.

She spoke:

"Good morning! Is it quite safe to bathe here?"

He smiled. He had a very pleasant smile. He assured her that it was quite safe.

She returned his smile.

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[THREE FOOLS
Continued from page eleven]

"Thanks. You won't mind my asking you, will you?"

It was obvious that he did not mind it at all. He came a little nearer and looked at her. He was shy.

"Excuse me, but are you my new neighbor?"

"I suppose so."

"I think I must have heard you singing. Was it you?"

"I hope I haven't disturbed you."

"Oh, not at all. I mean—I hope you will go on singing."

"How nice of you to say that."

"Oh, not nice. You've got a gorgeous voice. It just seems to suit this place. Last night you sang that thing from Bitter Sweet."

And suddenly he blushed.

"Damned cheek of me, of course. My breakfast will be waiting. You'll excuse me."

"Of course."

She liked his damned cheek and his shyness. He was the world's eternal boy.

Next day he called on her. He came formally, a little diffidently, and sat in her *salone*. Without being in the least egotistical, he explained to her who he was, and why he lived at Portofino—because Portofino had escaped being modern. No airplanes, no motors. Thank God, there was no road to the headland! Yes, there were a few motor boats in the harbor, but they were not very offensive motor boats. He assumed that this exquisite piece of coast was to her what it was to him.

"I'm a sort of kid that likes to play in the sun. Yes, and dream. Growing up seems to be a dreadful business."

She agreed that it could be a dreadful business. Sir Matthew had grown up rather like a steel pylon.

"So, you don't get bored here?"

His blue eyes were innocent.



"Bored? Well, hardly. It's so jolly good to be alive. I know half the boatmen in Portofino, and the lace-makers, and the police, and quite a number of babies. There is quite a lot to laugh at. As for looking at things, there's the sea. Always changing. Better than staring at reënforced concrete."

He laughed. His laughter was infectious.

"Do you ever help to bathe the babies?"

"They don't do that much in Italy. I've nursed them. Jolly little beggars—Italian kids."

Next day she returned his call, both formally and frankly. His eyes and his laughter had made up her mind for her. She was not going to poison the cup for so happy a warrior.

"I have a confession to make. Let's get it over at once. Possibly you will think it rather horrible, but it is not so horrible as it sounds. Your father commissioned me to convert you."

HE looked so perturbed and puzzled that she hastened to explain:

"You see, I presume your father thought me a thoroughly sophisticated person, a commercialized female. I am and I'm not. No woman is sophisticated—under certain circumstances."

He looked flushed, angry.

"The pater's a damned old fool, and one of the world's great men. I say—I'm awfully sorry."

"Don't worry. I am writing to Sir Matthew Irons tonight to tell him I am throwing up the job."

"But, I say, need you?"

"Of course."

"Oh, yes; I know how you feel. But—really—it's a priceless setting. I'm not afraid of listening to your voice."

His smile was whimsical.

"Really, I'm awfully obliged to the old man. Don't you think we might give him a little run for his money? After all, if this is a missionary society, what's the harm? The pater is a hot supporter of missions. I believe we used to sell the heathen cheap guns. Now we sell them motor bikes and gramophones."

He laughed, and she had to laugh with him.

"But—false pretenses?"

"Oh, nonsense! We'll preach to each other. You shall pretend to be Paris and I'll be Portofino."

She looked troubled.

"But, don't you see—if I'm not sincere—I'm not playing the game by Sir Matthew?"

"Was he playing the game with either of us?"

"Well, I'll stay on for a week. I shall feel a most disgraceful humbug."

Presumably, Sir Matthew Irons had sent out some confidential creature to watch the lady, and this gentleman had matters to report. The young people were bathing together; they wandered about the cliffs together; they sang together. They could be seen in Portofino itself, very friendly with the natives. They were wearing string shoes and the simplest of clothes. Sir Matthew's private Peeping Tom seemed to have misunderstood the inwardness of the great man's plot, for he spoke of Mrs. Carteret as a woman who appeared to enjoy the simplicities of Portofino.

Old Irons was not alarmed. His young widow was no fool.

He received letters from Mrs. Carteret:

"Osbert and I are very good friends. I think you are very fortunate in your son."

Sir Matthew did not quite approve of that sentence. She should have said that the son was very fortunate in the father.

WEEKS passed and Mrs. Carteret's letters ceased; but one day, much to his astonishment, the baronet received a check from her. A short note accompanied it:

DEAR SIR MATTHEW IRONS:

I am refunding you the money spent upon furnishing the Villa Violetta. The rent I am paying myself. I feel this is due to you, for I am afraid the experiment has proved a failure.

Yours truly,
KITTY CARTERET.



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Old Irons took the Rome Express, and in a very nasty temper. He arrived at Santa Margherita late at night and, putting up at the Hotel Savoia, ordered breakfast at half past seven and a taxi at eight. At half past eight he was crossing the piazza at Portofino. He took the path to the cape and, finding the iron gate of the Villa Violetta locked, he viciously rang the bell. An Italian maid answered it.

He could not make head or tail of the woman's Italian, but from her gestures he gathered that the signora was not at home. Not at home at nine in the morning! Probably she was in bed, and Sir Matthew pushed his way past her and walked toward the villa. He heard a sudden sound of laughter and then a voice singing:

"Hark, hark! the lark—"

These sounds of joy appeared to come from the next garden, and Sir Matthew set out to explore. He found a stone wall, and looking over it discovered a pretty picture—his son and the widow having breakfast together on Osbert's terrace. They raised their coffee cups as though toasting each other and began to sing in chorus:

"Hark, hark! the lark—"

Sir Matthew's face was choleric and red. His voice interrupted the duet:

"Stop that row!"

It ceased. They got up out of their chairs and stood side by side, looking at him. They did not appear in the least ashamed.

"Hallo, pater; you—are—early. Had breakfast?"

Sir Matthew shouted, but a little less loudly:

"I want to speak to that woman."

His son smiled upon him.

"Are you referring to my wife?"

Old Irons' steel jaw dropped. He stared at them.

"What do you mean, you young fool?"

Kitty answered him:

"I'm awfully sorry, Sir Matthew, but the mission to fools failed. Instead of converting, I became converted. I have joined the fools. You see—we have fifteen hundred a year between us. We find that we can be fools quite nicely on that."

THE END

Deal and Mut

The Tale of a Middle-
Youth must Play with

SOME men are incorrigible sentimentalists. They would scatter rose leaves on the corpse of the geocentric theory and hang a veil of silver tissue over Kant's *Categorical Imperative*. They are teleological even in tram-cars, or they are nothing.

Irene Vestris had the face of a saint. That is to say she showed to the patrons of the "Sorrento" an exquisite, waxlike pallor, a halo of copper-coloured hair and dark, babyish eyes. She moved gracefully and delicately. She looked fragile.

Mr. Nickerton sometimes lunched at the "Sorrento." As a director of Gossets he could always command a free lunch and a free cigar, and the company of his fellow directors, but there were times when Mr. Nickerton's sentimental soul desired other loveliness. He was a bore, a dry and egocentric person, and therefore found his fellow directors boring. Self-analysis was not in his catalogue, nor did he realise that he roused exasperation in the souls of other men. They spoke of him as "Old Snicky."

Mr. Nickerton was not old; forty-sevenish or so, and on his romantic days he would walk to the "Sorrento," and stand before the desk of the lady who assigned tables. She would smile at him, and Mr. Nickerton would feel doggish.

"No. 7 for Mr. Nickerton."

Often it fell to Irene to conduct Mr. Nickerton to his table, and she would say, "Good-morning, sir."

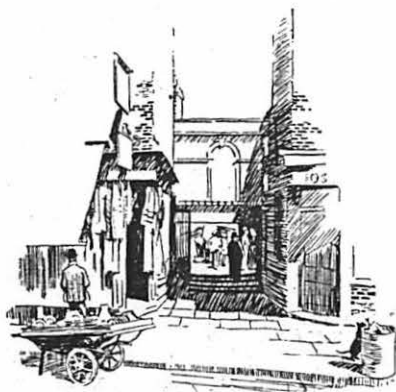
Mr. Nickerton would give her a little, sniggering simper. He was a long, thin person, colourless, with a narrow and sharpish nose. His hair had a mouselike smoothness; his trousers cut ice.

"Nice weather to-day."

"Quite, sir."

"Seven's my lucky number."

"Indeed, sir."



Seeing her enter that dubious house, her devotee was shocked and perplexed. His saint in this street of sinners!

His snigger was the celestial simper of a god. Jupiter smiled upon Leda, but Mr. Nickerton was not quite Jovian nor was Irene a swan. Her business was to show politeness to the "Sorrento's" patrons and to see them seated.

It was winter,

and when Irene woke in the back bedroom of the house of the Vestris family, in Tavistock Street, Highbury, she lay on her back and looked at the blind and wished that she could stay there. Her conjectures were simple, her curiosity practical. Was it raining? And if it was raining would she be able to reach Highbury Corner without getting her stockings splashed? And if she did reach Highbury Corner in a state of comparative dryness would she be able to mount the first bus, or would a whole series of buses be jammed with humanity? What would be the condition of Miss Swanson's

temper? Miss Swanson supervised at the "Sorrento." And what of the day's lunch, that meal which was shared by Miss Swanson and the other "conductresses," and Miss Giles who sat at the receipt of custom? This mid-day meal was an affair of delightful and depressing surprises; it depended upon the temper of old Ferrari, and on the number of lunches that had been served, and whether there was a superfluity. It might consist of thin soup, and Irish stew, and prunes. Occasionally there was a lobster, but that was when the "Sorrento's" attendance had been partial, and lobster had to be disposed of.

Irene was greedy about lobster, also about pineapple tart and meringues. On lucky days, when she foresaw chances of lobster or chicken,

she would glide about with a little saintly smile, a pale radiance.

She thought of other things as she



Irene looked at him as a wise young cat might look at a dog. Was it necessary to bristle and spit? But no, Mr. Nickerton was a very harmless sort of dog

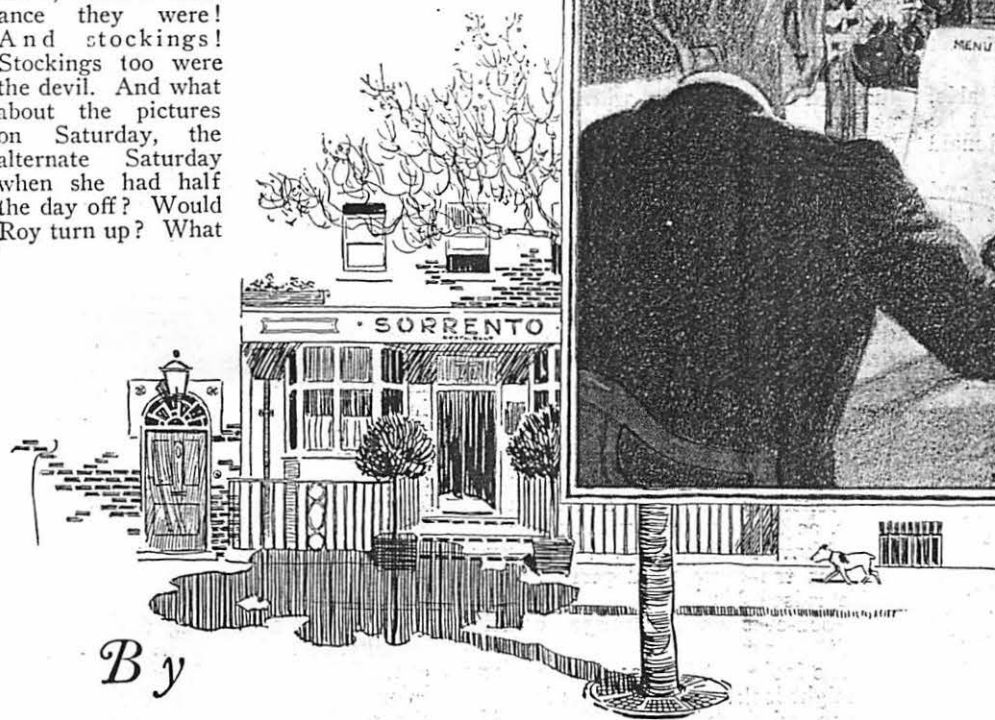
Aged Knight-Errant who forgot that Youth

ton

Illustrations

by
Treyer
Evans

lay in bed for those last five minutes. What about that hat in the window of "Phoebe's" in Shaftesbury Avenue? Her shoes needed new heels. Oh, damn shoes, what a nuisance they were! And stockings! Stockings too were the devil. And what about the pictures on Saturday, the alternate Saturday when she had half the day off? Would Roy turn up? What



Irene Vestris had the face of a saint. She looked fragile and showed the patrons of the "Sorrento" a halo of copper-coloured hair and an exquisite, waxlike pallor

Mr. Nickerton began to lunch more frequently at the "Sorrento." He became one of its familiar figures, and he was assigned the same table in a corner of the Gold Room. Mr. Nickerton had asked for that particular table because Irene walked the floor of that celestial room.

But there was space between them, the conventions of the restaurant, the chill of old Ferrari's shrewd eye. Never had he given his patrons mince, nor did he mince matters with his young ladies.

"See here. You smile just enough to make a gentleman feel welcome. But the glad eye business, cut it out."

Irene was afraid of old Ferrari, and she was afraid of Jules, the head waiter, and of Miss Swanson. A girl had to be so circumspect, and middle-aged gentlemen were apt to be so silly.

She gave Mr. Nickerton the one smile allowed by old Ferrari, and as a matter of fact she had no wish to give him more. If she was fresh young veal, Mr. Nickerton was good parsnip. He was the sort of man whom no sort of woman could get excited about.

"Very crowded to-day."

"Yes, very crowded, sir."

"I suppose you have to preside over the dinners as well as the lunches?"

She hovered for a moment.

"Yes, sir. And suppers."

"Good heavens! Midnight!"

She whisked away, and he thought how selfish the world was. Well-fed people demanding supper after the theatres, and keeping that delicate creature on her feet! It was abominable. And after supper she had to trail her way home, perhaps when there were no buses running, and of course she could not afford taxis.

He wanted to know her name. He felt that it was very absurd that he

By

Warwick Deeping

a pity Roy had so little cash, but then a young salesman in a gentleman's outfitters could not be expected to be rolling. Or perhaps Roy would take her to the particular Palais de Dance that they patronised? Life's little possibilities were not endless.

Mr. Nickerton saw her otherwise, as Byzantine gold and not as nice young veal. Like the sentimentalist he sublimated his emotions. She was like a Botticelli, and Mr. Nickerton pronounced the 'c' as in celery. He went to picture shows and could talk a little about art to people who knew nothing about it, but a business life had not made him word perfect. His trousers were more complete than his pronunciation. For trousers can be put in presses, but the tongue is a live member.

Mr. Nickerton looked more and more upon Irene Vestris. He rolled little

googly glances at her. He was creating a fair illusion even as Gossets created illusions in the windows of Regent Street.

He began to say little things to himself, sentimental and compassionate things.

"She's overworked. Too fine for this kind of life. She doesn't look happy. Sweet and sad. Perhaps she has people to help."

He imagined all sorts of wonderful things about Irene. She did not wear a wedding ring. He pictured her going home to an invalid mother, and helping to put a small sister to bed, and sitting down to sew with her copper-coloured head shining mysteriously. Probably she had a cub of a brother upon whom she gazed with gentle and compelling eyes, while persuading him to remember that trousers were not gifts from God.

Veal and Mutton

should not know her name. But how was he to find it out? Had he been man and inevitably male he would have asked her, and she would have understood him. The sentimental fiddlers leave both themselves and women guessing.

He pondered the problem. He might call up the head-waiter and tip him confidentially. But no, that would not be debonair. A little more delicacy was required. But supposing he invented a name and called her by it, and she corrected him? She might correct him. He would feel that he was making a definite approach if he could call her by name.

He did it. With his simper, and a googly eye, he addressed her.

"Good morning, Miss Weston."

She gave him a blank glance, and he seized the cunning chance.

"So sorry. Isn't that your name? I thought I heard—"

She smiled very faintly.

"My name's Vestris, sir."

Mr. Nickerton sat down at his table, unfolded his napkin, and felt that he was as good a man as any Ronald Colman or Douglas Fairbanks.

Now, Mr. Nickerton had a wife and a family, and his family did not take him with the seriousness that was his due, seeing that he was a wealthy man and a director. His wife addressed him abruptly. "Ted, come along. Time we were going." His two sons argued with him, and corrected him, and the elder of the two beat him at golf. His daughter was a most unsentimental young woman. She wore a *béret*, and rode a motor-bike, and had Mr. Nickerton attempted the "How is my darling little daughter" touch, she would have said—"Dad, don't be an idiot."

Mr. Nickerton felt that rose red life was slipping away before he had been sufficiently young and free and rich to dally and pull the rose, and pluck the grape. He felt an urge towards romance. He wanted to impress somebody emotionally. And so, he began to weave a tissue of dreams, with Irene Vestris as the sleeping princess. He imagined himself as the princely person playing the father and protector to this delicate damsel. He saw her in a secluded and dainty flat, befurred, perfumed, blossoming beneath his benediction, innocently his adopted dream-girl.

And then? Mr. Nickerton boggled a bit over the "then." There were moments when he staged a scene of passion, of two souls inevitably rushing together, of exalted and tender ecstasies upon a sofa. Yes, he could hear himself saying noble things.

"My beloved, it cannot be."

And Irene would cling to him.

"I can't live without you."

Here, Mr. Nickerton's imagination would let the curtain fall upon an ambiguously conceived crisis.

But how to develop the situation? Obviously the thing for him to do was to contrive a meeting with Miss Vestris upon neutral ground, in the street, anywhere outside the

glass doors of the "Sorrento." He asked himself questions. At what time did she arrive, and at what hour did she leave, and where was the sacred portal? A director of Gossets could not hang about the street watching for the comings and goings of an unattached girl. Mr. Nickerton was a niggler. He could not rush boldly upon the adventure and dare the possible rebuff. He had not it in him to exclaim with the poet—"Only the bold deserve the fair."

He adopted a most circuitous and cautious method. He obtained the services of a private inquiry agent, and took him to lunch at the "Sorrento," and indicated Miss Vestris. His instructions were whispered.

"I want you to find out where that young lady lives," and when she leaves this place. I have reasons, private and family reasons."

To the agent the problem was no problem at all. In a couple of days he was able to report to Mr. Nickerton that Miss Vestris lived with her people at No. 5, Tavistock Street, Highbury, that she left the "Sorrento" at about 9-30 p.m., and took a bus at the bottom of Shaftesbury Avenue.

Mrs. Nickerton had gone to Cannes, so her husband had not to create imaginary dinners and late business affairs. He dined at the "Sorrento" on that particular night, and he thought that Irene was looking very pale and tired. Afterwards he strolled, and so timed his loitering that he was passing the side entrance of the "Sorrento" about half past nine.

He was lucky. Irene emerged. She was alone. She stood on the pavement and looked up the street and down the street, as though some expected person should have been in sight. Mr. Nickerton was the unexpected person.

He raised his hat.

"Good-evening. Strange coincidence."

Irene looked at him as a wise young cat might look at a dog. Was it necessary to bristle and spit? But no, Mr. Nickerton was a very harmless sort of dog.

She smiled at him, and he was bewitched by her pallor.

"Just going home."

"And I was just going to my c Important business in town."

She stood hesitant upon her slim legs, and then moved to the right, and Nickerton moved with her.

"My way too. You don't mind?"

"No."

"Thank you so much. Ah, we c here, do we? Won't you take arm?"

He was both excited and frightened. His face wore an urbane simper. Would she take his arm?

She did. She thought it a rather ridiculous arm, stiff and angular as parental. But he seemed kind.

"You work very late sometimes, s Very. You see—heavy responsibilities, big business."

They arrived on the other side of the street. Mr. Nickerton's glance were bent upon her, while her own face wore a mask of curiosity and reserve.

She said, "It must be nice to be important. I take a bus over there."

He dreamed over her.

"Don't you get very tired?"

"Oh, rather!"

"It's quite wrong really. I do think women ought to work, not the kind of work."

They were jostled by the crowd, and this jostling supplied Mr. Nickerton with a delightful sense of nearness almost of protective possession. They stood and waited for a bus, but the particular and expected bus was slow in arriving. Mr. Nickerton had inspiration. The girl really did look fagged and ill.

He said, "Come. I can't let you stand about like this. You're tired. I'll put you in a taxi. Yes, my sho Please let me."

She hesitated.

"Oh, really—I—"

"Hullo, here's one."

He hailed a strolling taxi, and followed it as it drew in to the kerb, and opened the door. Was she following? Would she deign to enter her Cinderella coach? She did enter it, but with an air of being ready for possible emergencies.

"What address shall I give the driver?"

"No. 5, Tavistock Street, Highbury."

Mr. Nickerton gave the driver the address and a one pound note. "Lucky not very well. Don't wait for her bothered. See



Ferrari did not mince matters with his young ladies. "You smile just enough to make a gentleman feel welcome. But the glad eye business, cut it out!"



en with one gesture he the door, ith another bared his He was the gentleman. creet lover. oked at him the glass, aved a per- but grateful

is Vestris ot at all a ental person. ight be the or of a and sera- ace, but her as the soul alert and child. She ossessed by lovely devil th, and such it goes not ave through orment and h of sex. aternal hand sless to exor- uch a spirit, Mr. Nickert- pale and ly passion o more than ost of a sen- al and su- n gentleman ng in a white night-shirt. Only can play and contend with youth, row breathless and fierce in the y of loving.

Irene was worried. Something appened to Roy Bouchier. They ad a row one night, and Roy, after her that she could go to blazes, one elsewhere on his own account, d disappeared from the shop of s. Viner & Hall; his address of g Melchet Street, Islington, found o longer.

then he turned up one night at ock Street, looking shabby and he. He rang the Vestris bell, hen the door opened he stood re- ant at the bottom of the steps, emanded Irene. Dora, a younger had opened the door. e was told, and went out to him little front garden, with its sooty and aucuba. She was feeling disturbed. She had been dally-

cadilly Circus was just cadilly Circus, and to e Vestris its garish wd brought no familiar e. She waited five utes, ten minutes— Roy was a beast!



ing with Mr. Nickerton; she had allowed him to take her to a theatre and buy her chocolates. Mr. Nickerton was a sort of emotional fancy-dress.

"You, is it!"

"Yes, me."

He was both sullen and defiant.

"Where have you been all this time, you silly ass."

"Oh, nowhere. Don't suppose you care."

"That's my business, isn't it?"

They were rude to each other with the vexed and sophisticated rudeness of youth.

"Well, I got the push. No interest to you, I take it. Your fault, all the same."

"Thank you. How my fault?"

"Oh, messing about. You wanted a show, didn't you, and I had to pay. Hence the pyramids. Same old story."

He coughed. He was looking thin and worried, and her surface of hardness betrayed a crevice.

"You've got a cold, Roy. Come inside."

"Not likely. They'd be glad to see a chap who got the push for pinching collars and ties. That's me. They didn't prosecute. Very nice of 'em. Meanwhile I'm on the streets."

The edge of his youth was ironical and bitter.

"What a mug's game. Just to look a "Gilbert" when going out with a girl. You, my dear. And pawning silk handkerchiefs for dance tickets. Oh, hell! Thought you'd like to know. Good-night."

He went out of the gate and down the street, but Irene ran after him. Never in her life would she have run after a Nickerton in that sort of way.

"Roy, stop, don't be silly."

He did not stop, and she caught him up and held him by the arm.

"Do you mean you pinched things, because—?"

"Yes, just that."

"Oh, my dear! Where are you living?"

"Trojan Street, Soho. Nice little room at the top. New job! Not likely. No references."

She was thrilled and she was troubled.

"Oh, boy, what are we going to do about it?"

"Why, nothing. Get a new boy, old thing."

"I won't."

"Well, you're an idiot. So long."

He put her hands away.

"Go on, clear. I'm a back number."

"Meet me on Saturday. Piccadilly tube station. Three o'clock."

"Won't."

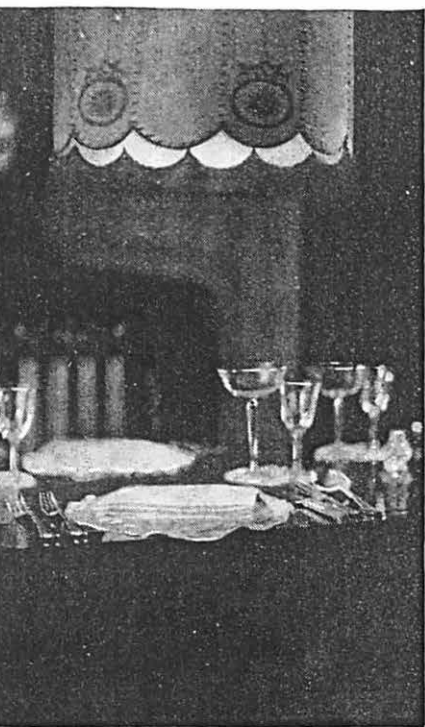
"Yes, you must. Don't be a beast, kid. I feel sort of responsible."

"Oh, do you! Think it over. Good-night."

She let him go, and she returned to No. 5, and eluding the family, went to bed. She felt upset. Never before in her little life had she felt so upset. Youth strove with youth. And she had felt flattered and shocked and challenged. Poor boy! She supposed that she had been an expensive young person, and that in playing up to her he had involved himself in this silly, sordid little scrape. But it was serious. Being one of the crowd she knew just how serious it was, and sitting on the edge of the bed she thought of the fatherly and sentimental Nickerton. He was in big business, a person of importance.

She waited amorously for Saturday, and at the rendezvous she was not unpunctual. Mr. Nickerton had asked her to go out with him, and she had put him off; she had told him that her mother was ill and that she was going home to nurse her. Angel! Piccadilly Circus was just Piccadilly Circus on a Saturday afternoon, and yet to Irene Vestris its garish crowd brought no familiar face. She waited, five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour. She began to feel uncomfortable, a loitering invitation to the prowling male. She began to be both angry and hurt. Roy was a beast.

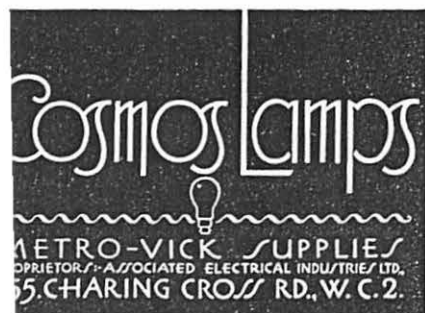
Her patience gave out, but she did not go home. On the contrary she set out in search of Trojan Street, and found it with the help of a little Jew boy whom she consulted. It was a shabby and surreptitious sort of street. Italianate, suggestive of cheap restaurants and sexual adventures. She walked up it, (Continued on page 98)



YOUR DINING ROOM



IF your dining room table lacks that subdued but delicious sparkle which you feel should be possible and know makes everybody look their best and brightest, change your lamps. Try "Cosmos Pearls" they cost no more, use no more current and yet satisfy the most exquisite requirements. Made by Met-Vick, every dealer will supply them.



S.B.122

Veal and Mutton

"Pneumonia, I'm afraid. Doctor's been. And he hasn't a bean. Pawned things, you know."

Irene's face had assumed a very definite radiance.

"Which house?"

"No. 12."

"Thanks ever so much. Lucky I met you. This is one of my jobs, I think, Bert."

"Say, you're a sport. You haven't chucked him?"

"I haven't. I'm not that sort."

"You're splendid."

She was not splendid; she was an instinct, and without shame. During the following week the solicitous Mr. Nickerton had every excuse for assuming that she was sitting up half the night nursing her mother. She looked fagged and heavy-eyed, and the soul of him whispered "Angel," and dreamed of fur coats and a little coupé car, and a holiday on the Riviera. He contrived to be sweet to her at the "Sorrento."

"How is your mother to-day?"

"Oh, better, thank you."

"So very glad. I can see that you haven't been sparing yourself. Anything I can do?"

She shone with pale radiance upon Mr. Nickerton, for the cunning of her love had marked him down as a potential victim. She understood that Mr. Nickerton might be useful, if properly and delicately handled. She had no pity for him. All her savage young compassion was absorbed in ministering to a derelict young idiot who was sick and in every sort of trouble. She was at her school for women, learning life's simple essentials.

And of course the obvious thing happened. Her middle-aged devotee shadowed her to Trojan Street, and seeing her enter that dubious house, was shocked and perplexed. His saint in this street of sinners! He supposed, yes, among other things, that she had been ignorant of his following her, whereas she had known that he was at her heels. Possibly she had counted on it.

So, she emerged suddenly from the house in Trojan Street, and came face to face with the great man who, in a state of travail, had wandered up and wandered down.

"Oh, Mr. Nickerton!"

He blinked at her; he was not quite equal to the occasion, but she, with a little air of breathlessness, stood close and looked up into his face.

"Fancy meeting you here! I'm just going to the chemist's."

He echoed—"The chemist's! But your mother—?"

To Mr. Nickerton her face was an emotional "close up."

"Not mother—here. Oh, more trouble. It's such a sad case. It's a boy whom we have always treated as one of the family. An orphan, you know. He's out of work, and he's got pneumonia, and mother couldn't come."

Mr. Nickerton's romance dared to lift its head.

"So—you—"

"Of course. I had to come and see. Mother was so worried, and poor Roy has nobody. Yes, I'm going to the chemist's for some medicine."

Mr. Nickerton walked with her to the chemist's. After all, she was an angelic person, a veritable young madonna.

"I wish I could do something to help."

"Perhaps you can, if poor Roy gets well"—and with a melting glance she disappeared into the shop.

Three weeks passed and Mr. Nickerton's dream was not wholly serene and happy. He was constantly reminded of the existence of an obscure young person called Roy. Also, Irene was behaving with a kind of bright and respectful animation, just as his daughter should have behaved and didn't. Daughterliness! Yes, Mr. Nickerton was looking down his long nose at this bright young creature who somehow managed to suggest that he really was a dear old thing, her dear old thing. Mr. Nickerton was feeling uneasy, as though he had caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror of youth and had received a shock.

He had asked Irene to dine with him on the Saturday. It should have been the dinner of a dream, an exquisite little celebration, subtle and intimate, but it wasn't. Certainly Irene flattered him; he might have been a god, but Jehovah, not Eros.

The suppliant betrayed herself.

"Oh, you've been so kind. I didn't believe there were people like you in the world."

"My dear, it's easy."

"Do you remember saying—I do hate asking, but do you think you could help poor Roy?"

Mr. Nickerton's chin betrayed a faint tremor.

"Help? Possibly. But what—?"

"You see, the silly boy got into trouble. Nothing serious, but his firm sacked him. And he's been so ill, and he wouldn't have any food unless we—"

Her eyes were large and soft, and the sentimentalist in Mr. Nickerton confronted the inevitable.

"Well, perhaps I could. You mean—a situation?"

"Yes. You're so powerful, and so good."

To Mr. Nickerton the champagne was less than water.

But he did behave rather well. It may have occurred to him, as it must have occurred to many Mr. Nickertons, that to retreat with grace, and crowned with elderly dignity, was the one thing left to him. He smothered any desire to analyse the situation. He did not explore the astuteness of the young damsel. He gave young Roy an interview, and disliked him, and just because he disliked him, felt all the more urged to prove his power.

He said to himself, "Suppose I shall have to push the pup into some place."

He did so, and having done so ceased to frequent the "Sorrento." His wife had returned from Cannes. And one day, meeting young Roy on the stairs, he paused like the great man and inquired of youth,

"Well, Bouchier, how are you getting on?"

"Oh, splendidly, sir, thanks to you, sir. I'm going to be married next month."

Mr. Nickerton gave him a faint, distant, and Olympian smile, and passed on. He did not ask Mr. Bouchier the name of the lady. He divined it.

BCM/Housekeeping London

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pimples

vanished—friends surprised.

No matter how long you have been troubled with pimples or spots, Wex—the pleasant sparkling morning drink—will clear them right away. Wex is a natural remedy. It removes pimples because it removes the cause. Read this:—



"I must tell you that I have found Wex a wonderful remedy for pimples, and my friends were all inquiring the reason for their sudden disappearance. I promptly told them to try Wex, and their own results were the same as mine. My face is now quite clear, and I shall always keep a supply of Wex in the house."

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Pimples are caused by poisons in the blood being forced through the skin pores instead of being eliminated in the ordinary way through the liver. This in turn is caused by thickening of the bile. Wex goes to the root of the trouble, assisting nature by thinning the bile, thus enabling the liver to clear away the impurities which are clogging the system. Pimples vanish, the skin becomes clear, while the whole system is toned. Wex is a delicious sparkling morning drink.

You take one teaspoonful in half a glass of water on rising. Sold by over 9,000 Chemists, including all branches Boots, Taylor's Drug Company, Timothy White's, etc., at 1s. 6d. per bottle, 2s. 6d. double quantity. Made by E. Griffiths Hughes, Ltd. Established 1756.

WEX

Sparkling Grape Saline



THE SLEEP OF THE JUST

LIKE the quiet serenity of an easy conscience; like a good deed in a difficult day. The "Universal" Mattress gives that complete repose which the tired body seeks. The simple luxury of a truly cosy bed is amongst the greatest of life's gifts; here is sleep of the natural kind. The sleep of the just. The secret? The secret sleeps snugly, too, in soft recesses of the famous spring interior.

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SOLD BY ALL LEADING
FURNISHING HOUSES
IN GREAT BRITAIN

J.J.M.

Some Suggestions for the Picnic Basket

(Continued from page 79)

special unbreakable "china" are ideal for picnicking, while cardboard "glasses," plates and dishes will solve the problem for others. Aluminium cups are light and durable, and entirely satisfactory for cold drinks, but it is a significant fact that those who have once attempted to drink hot liquids from them shun a repetition of the experiment.

Paper cloths and serviettes are also a valuable addition to the picnic basket.

To turn to the important question of food, sandwiches in one form or another are always a great standby when picnicking, and can be varied by using bridge rolls in place of bread. The use of these rolls also saves considerable time in preparation. Meat loaves and rolls, salads, patty cases with well-flavoured fillings, are also usually acceptable, while for the second course individual blanchmanges, creams and jellies are among the most practical suggestions, and can be prepared in small paper cases.

The car-owner can also include ice-cream in the menu, for a small freezer can easily be transported in a car of average size, the ice-cream mixture being of course prepared before starting.

A suggested menu and recipes are given below. If considered too elaborate, individual items can be chosen for the smaller and more homely picnic.

Crab Slices
Savoury Meat Rolls Ham and Egg Cutlets
Potato Salad
Lemon Jelly Coconut Gingerbread
Cheese Scones Sardine Rolls
Lemonade

Crab Slices

1 tin crab ½ teaspoonful lemon juice
1 cupful thick bread sauce ½ oz. gelatine
½ teaspoonful anchovy essence 2 tablespoonfuls milk
Salt and pepper Egg and bread-crumbs

Cut the crab up finely. Mix with the bread sauce, anchovy essence, lemon juice and seasoning. Soak the gelatine in the milk, mix with the above ingredients and spread over a flat oblong dish. When cold cut into fingers with a sharp knife. Brush over with egg, roll in breadcrumbs, and fry in hot fat. Serve cold with tomato and cucumber.

Veal and Ham Rolls

6 oz. cold veal 4 oz. breadcrumbs
2 oz. cold ham Grated rind ½ lemon
2 oz. melted butter ½ oz. mixed savoury herbs
Little ground mace ½ teaspoonful salt
Little grated nutmeg ½ teaspoonful pepper
Pinch of cayenne Yolk of one egg
Rough puff pastry

Since the veal and ham and mix well with the other ingredients. Bind with the yolk of egg and melted butter or margarine. Form into small rolls about 2½ in. long and fold in squares of thin rough puff pastry. Brush over with beaten egg and bake in a hot oven of approximately 450° F. for 10-15 minutes.

Cheese Scones

½ lb. flour ½ oz. margarine
2 teaspoonfuls baking powder Approximately 1 gill milk
½ teaspoonful salt 3 oz. grated cheese

Sieve the flour, baking powder, salt and grated cheese, and rub in the margarine. Then add the milk, roll out, cut into small rounds and bake in a hot oven at 450° F.

Coconut Gingerbread

5 oz. flour ½ oz. ginger
3 oz. ground rice 8 oz. treacle
Grated rind of 1 lemon 2½ oz. butter
2½ oz. sugar
2½ oz. grated coconut

Sieve the flour, ground rice and ginger and add the grated rind of one lemon. Heat the treacle, butter and sugar in a saucepan, and add to the previous mixture, beating until quite smooth. Stir in the coconut and bake in a fairly moderate oven at 320° F.

Potato Salad

1 lb. cooked potatoes 2 oz. hazel nuts (if available)
1 or 2 chives
Salad dressing

Cut the potatoes into dice and mix with chopped hazel nuts, a few chopped chives and boiled salad dressing or mayonnaise. Serve with watercress.

Ham and Egg Cutlets

2 hard boiled eggs 3 oz. ham
½ oz. butter Chopped parsley
½ oz. flour Egg and bread-crumbs
½ gill milk

Melt the butter, add the flour, stir in the milk and cook for 8-10 minutes. Add the chopped hard boiled egg, ham and parsley, and leave on a plate to get firm. Form into cutlets and coat with egg and breadcrumbs. Fry in deep fat until a golden-brown.

Veal and Mutton

(Continued from page 9)

and she walked down it, and was stared at, and felt disturbed and indignant. Because she had not the faintest idea which was the house in which Roy lodged, or whether he still lodged in Trojan Street.

She was about to give it up when she saw a man coming out of a house a few yards ahead of her. She recognised the man. He had been a fellow assistant of

Roy's, and had more than once helped to make a four at their Palais de Danse. She hailed him.

"Mr. Farrer."

"Hallo! It's Irene. I say."

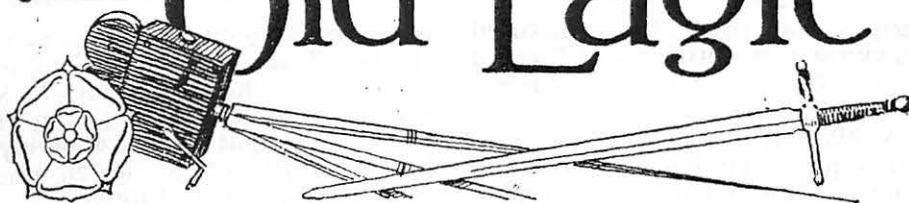
"I'm looking for Roy. He promised."

Mr. Farrer grew confidential.

"Just been to see him, poor old lad. He's ill."

"Ill! How much?"

The Old Eagle



By WARWICK DEEPING

A HOUSE PARTY—TWO KNIGHTS ERRANT—A LADY AND HER LORD

REGINALD BLAIRE and Stephen Longworth hated each other, but when they met on a Waterloo platform on their way to John Mulcaster's at Sellwood House they chose to travel in the same first-class compartment.

"What, you here, confound you!" Each man's eyes had said that, but even hatred dissembles itself when two men meet on their way to pursue the same woman. Reginald Blaire was blue-eyed, buxom, and inclined to be arrogant. Stephen Longworth, tall, swarthy, and intense, had a supercilious lip. Both were rather young; neither of them had any special ability; neither of them had ever accomplished anything unusual, or were likely to accomplish it, yet each had a fine conceit of himself. They were full-blooded young men of much assurance, and quite guiltless of any sense of humour.

Blaire proffered an open cigarette case.

"Sellwood—I suppose?"

Longworth accepted a cigarette, lit it, and opened a copy of *The Bystander*.

"Yes, fine old place. I suppose old Mulcaster has made a mess of it. They were saying at the club the other day that the old brute is in his dotage."

Blaire laughed.

"And we are going to stay at the brute's house! A bit cynical, isn't it? By the way, who got you your invitation?"

"Lady Mendlesham."

"The Honourable Flo got me mine. She hinted that old Mulcaster had some new stunt on. By the way—how old is he?"

"Must be sixty."

"Successful old devil in his day. A bit of a swashbuckler, I should imagine."

"I have heard that he was a prize liar."

So these two self-assured young men dismissed that extinct volcano which was

John Mulcaster, and settled down to read the various periodicals which they had collected from the bookstall. Both of them kept an alert eye on the platform until the train steamed out, and each suspected the inspiration of the other's alertness. Marion York might be travelling to Sellwood on this train, and both Blaire and Longworth had designs upon Marion York. She was the most intriguing widow in London. In Blaire's vernacular, she was "It."

The month was June, and Sellwood in June was England at its greenest, parkland and wood and water, a stateliness, a mystery, a book for the hands of poets, painters, and fair women. The house was Tudor, and the Tudor rose bloomed red on the windows. Knowledgeable people came to see the armour and the tapestries at Sellwood, for there were none finer in the kingdom.

Ambition is the passion for self-expression, and in John Mulcaster's case it had been fierce and soaring, and had spread its wings over three continents. The man was part hunter, part knight errant, part merchant prince. He had built railways; he had financed and won an obscure war in some corner of South America; he had gone treasure-hunting under the sea; he had been lost for six months in Central Africa. Someone had once christened him the Red Eagle, but the description—though picturesque—was inadequate, for it is not certain that an eagle has a sense of humour, and Mulcaster's sense of humour was very strong.

"You old devil!" said the lady.

She sat on the oak seat at the end of the long walk and surveyed him as he stood there in that most characteristic attitude of his, his hands in his pockets, shoulders well back, the hollow of his waist showing, his head cocked and slightly to one side. His red hair had a powdering of grey. His vivid, smiling blue eyes looked down at her ironically. He was very tall, and as lean as he had

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ever been. She could have pictured John Hawkwood or Gustavus of Sweden or Peter the Great in the lean, shrewd, galliard, smiling fierceness of him.

He—on his part—regarded her with masterful respect. He had discovered in her a woman who did not bore him, a woman who appealed to his sense of adventure, and who was as interesting as post-war Europe. She had wit, a physical aliveness that was better than mere beauty, and she was straight. He had made up his mind that he wanted to round off his career by marrying Mrs. Marion York.

"To be called a devil," he said, "may be flattering, but to be called an old devil—!"

"There are many variations of the word 'old.'"

"Inflexions—suggestions! I would like to remind you that I can still run five miles. But what do you think of my idea?"

"I called you an old devil," she said, laughing up at him with those softly intelligent dark eyes of hers.

"Which means?"

"That it piques me."

He smiled, and, when he smiled, kindly humorous wrinkles showed about his eyes.

"Here," he said, "you have a house-party, a collection of twenty-odd people who have to be amused. I tried to think of something original, so I hired a gentleman with a cinematograph, and we'll make our own impromptu picture play. An adaptation of that superb novel of Maurice Hewlett's, or something of that kind. What do you say?"

"That you are superbly young."

"Dear lady, I bow to the compliment, but it does not answer my question."

"It does," she said. "I think the idea delightful. It ought to amuse the dullest of us. But what about dresses?"

"I arranged that; I had two basketsful sent down from Wigson's. We can find our own armour. I'm rather keen on seeing a few lusty youngsters turned into lobsters!"

She laughed.

"Who will be the producer?"

"I shall."

"Am I to have a part?"

"I have been waiting for an opportunity to retort upon you. You will be the heroine."

"Mr. Mulcaster," she said, "I'm much too old to be heroic."

He put his head on one side, and diverging for a moment, stood looking

at a rose on one of the standards. He stroked it gently with his long fingers.

"Did you hear that, pet? She said she is too old, and some gossip whispered to me that quite a third of my house-party consists of gentlemen who would disagree with that statement."

He cocked his head, his little Spanish beard suggesting gallant audacity, his blue eyes wisely wicked.

"You—a'hem—devil!" she said.

He came back to her.

"Surely there are some young sparrow-hawks in the party? Yes—I think so. I want the thing to go; I want something in it. What do you say?"

"I might repeat myself. But if you insist on my being a heroine? You won't want me to ride a horse bare-backed, or be dragged by the hair, or be made to run about like a gipsy in nasty, prickly places?"

"Of course not. I produce charming situations for you. I propose leaving the players a certain amount of initiative; I don't want to cramp anyone's style. Supposing we all discuss the thing after dinner to-night?"

"One point," she said; "Don't let us take the 'Forest Lovers'; it is too good to be burlesqued. Can't we invent a tale of our own?"

"An excellent idea. We may be able to do without a villain."

She shook her head at him.

"Now, what does that mean?" he asked.

"That you are a—a'hem—villain."

"Dear lady, I am only the Queen's jester."

The rest of Mr. Mulcaster's house-party arrived during the day, including the two young men who had no respect for extinct volcanoes. They shook hands with John Mulcaster, and were not incommoded by the smiling straightness of his fierce blue eyes, for they were not interested in Mr. Mulcaster, but in Mrs. Marion York.

Reginald Blaire scored the first success. He inveigled the lady into a punt on the lake, and posing there in his immaculate pink and whiteness while she leant upon a pile of amber-coloured cushions, he proceeded to amuse her. He had a great flow, and very young girls thought him a wit.

"A bit eccentric, our host—what! Reminds me somewhat of the great G. B. S."

Mrs. York asked him whether he had ever met the great G. B. S. The mischief in her eyes was veiled.

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"No," he said, "hardly. Seen the old jester pose, you know. Couldn't have my friends saying 'Qu'va t il faire dans cette galère!' I haven't got a



Lady Isabelle, seated on her cloth of red damask began to laugh.

"Part of the pose. Still, I suppose the old boy has been a bit of a lad in his day."

So Reginald Blaire amused her after tea, but Stephen Longworth appropriated her for twenty minutes before the bell rang for dinner.

He was more serious than Blaire, more sententious, more of a solemn ass, and he made her parade up and down the old Jacobean ball-room while he gave her a little lecture on the Aubussons and the Gobelins, and on the Italian, English, and German armour. He, too, assumed that Mr. Mulcaster was wholly decrepit!

red head, and I don't wear a red tie. I get rather bored, you know, with these sprightly old men."

She laughed, and he thought that she was laughing with him.

"But Mr. Mulcaster is not—so very—old."

"The trouble is—dear lady—he can't look into his own mouth."

"That's rather curious, for I have heard him say that he has never had toothache—and that he has never lost a tooth."

"I wonder what the old chap is going to do with all this plunder. He ought to make it a public bequest."

"Why not suggest it to Mr. Mulcaster?" she asked, "only—I shouldn't use the word 'plunder.'"

"But that's just what it is. He was a modern adventurer, a sort of Pizarro."

"It isn't everybody who can be a Pizarro," she suggested. "Doesn't it require strength, courage, a personality?"

Mr. Longworth corrected her.

"No, just beastly self-assurance and no sense of humour."

"It had not struck me that way before," she said; "perhaps Mr. Mulcaster has no sense of humour."

During dinner that evening John Mulcaster made a public announcement of the picture play idea, and it met with immediate favour.

"We have the machine, the man, the costumes," he said. "All that will be necessary is to produce a plot. Now, I suggest—"

But Mr. Blaire and Mr. Longworth had ideas of their own, and though Mr. Mulcaster was their host he was a mere elderly gentleman, and in these days youth expects to be heard. They began to talk with a good deal of assurance, and though they talked against each other, they did not both talk at once. They trod on the tails of each other's sentences, and intervened and argued with an air of mutual intolerance. And their host reduced to silence, sat and listened with a queer smile in his blue eyes.

"Now, when I was helping Di down at Burlingham we worked in quite a number of stunts. The thing is to get good grouping—you take me—"

"That's all very well, but you want a trained crowd. With a lot of amateurs—"

"As I was saying—the grouping—"

"I think, my dear chap, if you consider my point of view, you'll find—"

The argument continued for quite a long time, jolted and broken now and again by tentative suggestions from Lady Mendlesham, Sir Guy Dormer, Christabel Gorringer and others. Mrs. York said nothing, but she looked amused. Once or twice her eyes met the eyes of Mr. Mulcaster.

When two rather bumptious and full-blooded young men begin an argument which is nothing less than a wordy duel, life is apt to yawn and let them do their worst. John Mulcaster never argued, but he did dare to make a suggestion.

"Supposing we all sit down after dinner

and that each produces a rough plot. We can read them out and vote on the best. I take it we have two experts here."

"But how about allocating the parts?"

"My dear chap, the plot must come before the players—"

Mr. Mulcaster saw another argument developing, and he squashed it.

"I will assign the parts. You can leave that to me."

Either there was something final in his tone, or the sparrow-hawks realized that even an elderly host must be allowed some sop to soothe him; at all events, the choice was left with Mr. Mulcaster. Followed much work with pencils and sheets of note-paper in library and smoking-room and elsewhere. It was not till ten o'clock that the whole party gathered in the music-room, and each read out the result of his or her imaginings.

Mrs. York's plot received the most votes, and yet it was not her plot, but Mr. Mulcaster's.

It ran as follows:

"Sir John Danglish has gone on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and has not been heard of for five years. He is presumed to be dead. His wife—Lady Isabelle—is being courted by two young knights—Sir Fulk Flambar and Sir Roger Ragworth. She refuses both—but they are not to be discouraged. In the end they decide to fight each other for her, and she agrees to marry the victor. They fight in a glade of the forest, with the lady looking on. One vanquishes the other. Towards the end of the fight a man in the dress of a palmer—Sir John Danglish—appears among the trees. He watches. He sees the lady give her hand to the victor. He understands that, like most men returned from the grave, he is superfluous. He steals away and becomes a monk."

Having settled on the plot, they proceeded to discuss the parts, and here Mr. Mulcaster showed himself an autocrat.

"Mrs. York shall play Isabelle. Let me see: we shall have to create a few extra characters, but I think that the parts of Sir Fulk Flambar and Sir Roger Ragworth must go to our young men."

He glanced at Blaire and Longworth.

"You can settle the names between you."

They accepted the responsibilities of youth, but both—in one breath—began to point out a very serious omission.

"But—in the plot—we aren't told which fellow whops the other—"

"It's rather essential—isn't it?"

Mr. Mulcaster agreed, and his blue eyes waited upon Mrs. Marion York.

"No doubt you can tell us which was the fortunate knight?"

She smiled at him.

"But I can't. I hadn't made up my mind. Don't you think we might let Mr. Blaire and Mr. Longworth decide it?"

"Yes, they can toss for it, or play each other at tennis for it. Is that agreeable to our two heroes?"

Mr. Blaire and Mr. Longworth exchanged a politely hostile glare.

"Yes, I dare say we can arrange it."

"Yes, I think so."

And then Lady Mendlesham's deep voice was heard, asking a question.

"And who is to play poor Sir John Danglish?"

"I'll take that part myself," said Mr. Mulcaster. "I don't suppose anybody else wants it."

On the morning of the next day there was a great trying-on of costumes, and Messrs. Blaire and Longworth, with the assistance of Mr. Mulcaster's valet and chauffeur, spent two hours in getting inside two of Mr. Mulcaster's suits of armour. They came out on to the terrace, and clanked about experimentally, waving hand-and-a-half swords, but at the end of a quarter of an hour they began to make most unheroic complaints.

"I say, this confounded tin coat is rubbing me to the bone."

"Mine gets me on the right shoulder."

Mr. Mulcaster showed great concern.

"I suppose you have padded yourselves?"

"No."

"We didn't realize——"

"Good heavens, you must be padded. You each want a couple of sweaters or three winter vests. I'll get James to look them out for you."

"But I say——!"

"It was seventy-nine in the shade yesterday!"

"My dear boys, you won't notice it under that cold steel. Besides, you will be mounted a good part of the time."

Mr. Mulcaster had consulted the cinema gentleman, and they had selected the setting for the various scenes, the courtyard, the great hall, the bridge, the rose garden, the island in the middle of the lake, a glade in the beech-woods surrounding the park. An undress rehearsal was arranged after tea, and for amateurs the acting was quite creditable, Mr. Blaire and Mr. Longworth putting much verve and passion into their parts. In

fact, it began to be obvious that they were not acting, and when the fight was staged the situation showed signs of strain.

They were armed with walking sticks, and when Reggie Blaire cracked Stephen Longworth across the right thigh, Mr. Longworth retaliated with a vicious smack at Mr. Blaire's right arm.

Mr. Mulcaster intervened, for this ferocity was a little previous.

"Excuse me, but I suppose you have settled the point between you?"

They glared at him instead of at each other.

"No, we haven't."

"Not yet."

"You can't both be victorious."

"That's obvious."

"But—it—must be settled. I suggest that Mr. Longworth shall win."

"All right," said Mr. Blaire, who was the more truculent of the two; "you can suggest that. Suppose we leave it there."

"Excellent," said Mr. Mulcaster; "so we can consider that point settled."

But it was not settled, and he had a very shrewd suspicion that it was not settled; and when Mrs. York raised the question with him he gave her one of his wicked smiles.

"I am taking precautions," he said; "I am having the swords well blunted, and the points filed off. And I am going to supervise the dressing and see that they have unlimited padding. They won't be able to hurt each other."

"You old——!"

"Yes, I am utterly decrepit, dear lady. But do not worry. These lads will get very hot and very exhausted, and I shall have my car ready to take them home. But I think we shall get quite a spirited piece of action, and a dramatic finale."

"I think you are the wickedest man I ever met," she said.

The day dawned perfectly, with a faint white mist hanging in the Sellwood valley and over the lake, and two quarrelsome young gentlemen, who disliked each other with exceeding fierceness, realized that the day was going to be unusually hot. They began the morning with a sense of irritation, and they were vaguely annoyed by the opening scene of the play. Old Mulcaster, in the part of Sir John Danglish, took leave of his wife on Sellwood Bridge, with Lady Mendlesham acting the part of the noble mother, and Christabel Gorrings as Isabelle's maid. Mulcaster wore a suit

of superbly fluted armour, and was mounted on a black horse. His head was uncovered, and he looked a fine and impressive figure.

"Like that picture of Sir Isumbras," said someone.

He dismounted and embraced Marion York, and remounting his horse with surprising agility, rode off with his esquire and his men on his way to the sacred city of Jerusalem.

Messrs. Blaire and Longworth both thought of it as Jericho. That embrace had seemed rather superfluous, and a challenge to their own youth.

"Well, anyhow," said Blaire, "I suppose I shall be allowed to do the thing properly at the end."

The supercilious Longworth corrected him.

"I—think—if you remember—that it has been arranged that that is my job."

"Oh, is it?" said his rival; "we'll see."

The two sparrow-hawks were permitted to do their love-making in doublets and hose, and they posed very picturesquely in the great hall, in the rose-garden, and on the island in the lake. Longworth was particularly pleased with himself in that island scene, where he played the Irving among the willows. He rather believed that he had wiped the eye of that bumptious swashbuckler Blaire. Blaire thought otherwise, but that was only natural. He referred to Longworth as a serene and sententious ass. After these love-scenes they adjourned for lunch, and Mr. Mulcaster, already dressed in his palmer's gown, suggested that they should rest for an hour or two, and not take the fighting scene till after tea.

"It will be a little warm for these two gentlemen. Besides, I want to see them well wadded, and judging by yesterday's experimental dress-parade—!"

He looked at them with those queer, ironical blue eyes of his, and they were as babes to his wickedness.

"I think it is a good idea," said Blaire. "I don't want to hurt my eminent friend."

Longworth's face gave him defiance.

"I think it takes Blaire two hours to get inside his shell," he observed; "he is fatter than I am."

The two heroes did not appear for tea, for they were being armed for the fray, and Mr. Mulcaster was supervising the arming, and showing an almost fussy carefulness in the matter of padding. Longworth was wearing two sweaters, and Blaire four of Mr. Mulcaster's winter

vests. The valet and the chauffeur had much to do to make the harness cover them.

"Now, the helmets."

"Poof," said Blaire, "can I have a drink before the lid goes on?"

"James, fetch two whiskies."

"And make them strong, man."

Mulcaster's two cars were to take the main party to the beech-wood where the fight was to be staged, but the two knights were to arrive on horseback in proper, romantic fashion. A length of red damask was spread at the foot of a beech tree, and here Lady Isabelle seated herself ready to watch the combat between her two lovers. Mr. Mulcaster, in his palmer's gown, took cover among the trees. The rest of the players placed themselves where they would not interfere with the gentleman of the camera.

It was nearly six o'clock, and the sunlight was splashing in rays of gold through the beech trees, and the glade was a place of mysterious beauty. A shaft of light touched the red damask upon which Mrs. Marion sat. She was smiling, yet trying not to smile. She was too much aware of the wicked and mischievous eyes of Mr. Mulcaster behind a neighbouring tree.

The rivals appeared on horseback, entering the glade from left and right, waving their swords at each other; and in dismounting, Longworth, who was an indifferent horseman, overbalanced owing to the weight of his armour, and fell on his back. A groom rushed in and seized the horse, but the incident had a ridiculous side, for Mr. Longworth could not get up. He had to be put upon his feet by several of the house-party.

Blaire, who had been making himself heavily gallant to the Lady Isabelle, stood there roaring with laughter.

"Come on, my mortal enemy. I have only to give you the push and the lady is mine."

Longworth came lumbering stiffly down on him.

"Pup!" he said.

They had left their visors up, and a voice—it was Mulcaster's—called to them to drop those steel grids. Both men were angry, Longworth because of his tumble, Blaire because he had been called a pup, and they fell upon each other with extreme fierceness. They heaved and parried and slashed, and the clangour of it filled the wood.

It was a great fight, but it led very quickly to a state of heat and exhaustion.

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They blundered to and fro like a couple of clumsy dolls, striking at each other and missing, creatures of ridiculous and laboured fury. And Lady Isabelle, seated on her cloth of damask, so far forgot the seriousness of the scene that she began to laugh, and her laughter was uncontrollable.

Presently they stood tottering and lowering on each other like a couple of exhausted bulls.

"Fall down, hang you," gasped Longworth; "you are spoiling the show."

"Fall down yourself," panted his rival.

Incensed, they charged each other, clashed together, rebounded and fell flat. And there they lay, both vanquished and both victorious, utterly helpless; while a number of unsympathetic humans allowed themselves full liberty to laugh.

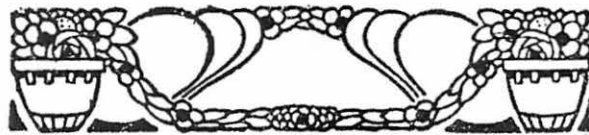
But the climax was to come. Sir John Danglish, that forlorn wanderer from Palestine, appeared from among the beech trees, and after gazing ironically at the two prostrate knights, turned with a dramatic spreading of the arms to Lady Isabelle. And Lady Isabelle, still laughing, welcomed the lost one with fine tenderness. They embraced.

Messrs. Blaire and Longworth had been assisted into a sitting position by two members of the house-party, and they witnessed this last tableau of lord and lady reunited and obviously forgetful of two fallen heroes. They stared; they exchanged glances.

"I say, that wasn't the ending we had arranged. The old blighter——"

"Man," said Longworth, "I believe the old devil has been fooling us!"

He had.



Mistress: "Have you given the goldfish any fresh water, Mary?"

Mary: "No, Mum; they ain't drunk all that up yet."

Sept 1924
Cassell's

The Bird of Prey

By

WARWICK DEEPING

(3)

A MAN at his club had spoken once of Hamlyn Clyde as "that quarrelsome devil," and when Hamlyn Clyde came to San Jeronimo, which had the reputation of being a quarrelsome town, he was asking for adventure.

Moreover, San Jeronimo was prejudiced against Englishmen and Yankees. There were too many of these gentlemen riding the high horse about the world, buying land, arranging concessions, parading a masterful and restless energy. San Jeronimo had begun to talk of South America for the South Americans, and San Jeronimo for San Jeronimo.

The Englishman put up at the Hotel Blanco. He had a face like a cross eagle, and dark and very deep-set eyes. He was tanned to an extreme brownness, and he stood six foot two.

Seated under the awning, with his long legs stretched out, and a drink beside him, he was observed and discussed by the loungers. He took no notice of anybody. He paid no courtesies. He looked ready to quarrel with any man who spoke to him.

Little Janini, the lawyer, clapping his hands for the Indian waiter, glanced down his nose at the Englishman's long legs.

"Just like a bird—a bird of prey."

Someone took up the simile.

"With a beak like a vulture. But what's he here for?"

Janini shrugged and spat.

"To buy fleas!"

"I remember," said another man, who wore no collar, "that the Barbastro estate is for sale next week."

"True."

"It is said that it will go cheap."

The lawyer looked bland and sly.

"That's as it may be. There is not a better estate in the province, though poor old Juan was too fond of the women."

"Well, let someone in San Jeronimo buy it. But do you suppose that English fellow—"

"When there has been a death, my friend—"

"The vultures arrive."

"Ha, that's it! He is some confounded prospector, one of these financial brigands. I say that it ought to be made illegal, this buying of land by foreigners."

Janini chuckled.

"Well, go and tell him so."

But no one went.

At that moment arrived Captain Jose Zurbaran, chief of the police, bland, smiling, with a head like polished black marble, debonair, serene. The loungers saw him bow to the Englishman, and the Englishman drew up his long legs and gave a jerk of the head.

Captain Jose paused at his table.

"I hope that the señor is comfortable here?"

"Quite," said the Englishman, laconic and unsmiling; "thanks for inquiring."

"If I can be of any use—"

Clyde collared a chair and swung it round.

"Sit down."

The captain seated himself, and the Englishman clapped his hands for the waiter, and asked Zurbaran what he would drink. The good citizens of St. Jeronimo looked with disapproval at their townsman who sat smiling at the Englishman, and making himself polite. Now if Captain Zurbaran had such people arrested and kicked out of the town, San Jeronimo could go its sleepy way unprovoked by energetic and offensive Anglo-Saxons.

While Clyde and the captain were talking a very large man passed across the plaza in front of the Hotel Blanco. He looked no more than five-and-thirty, yet his red sash seemed to hold his figure

suspended, and his cheeks quivered, and his neck bulged above his collar. He had a flat and suspicious eye. Seeing the captain there he turned aside and lifted a huge hat.

Zurbaran stood up.

"Señor Rosario—Meester Clyde."

The Englishman looked hard at the Spaniard, and nodded his eagle's head.

"Sit down. What will you drink?"

The citizens of San Jeronimo had further cause to be scandalized, for Señor Rosario was a very great man in the town, and the bulk of him was symbolical. And here was he joining Zurbaran at the Englishman's table, accepting Clyde's hospitality, and smiling upon him with his flat eyes. Had these men no pride? Or were their smiles less servile than they seemed?

At the end of half an hour Rosario and the captain rose, and after bowing to Clyde went off together. It was understood that Rosario was to marry Zurbaran's sister, though she was as thin and supple as he was fat. A happy contrast! The loungers saw these two pause for a moment by the church. Rosario was saying something to the captain.

"Can't you have him arrested?"

Zurbaran shrugged.

"His passport is in order."

"Hang his passport! Did you ever see such a face? He looked ready to eat me."

"My dear señor—you? A large meal!"

"Be serious. But did you ever see a more quarrelsome-looking fellow? Come—that's an idea."

When Captain Zurbaran returned to his house he had the air of a sleek cat ready to lap milk. His sister Carmen was sitting in the little courtyard under the shade of a tree, with a fountain making a pleasant plashing. Miss Carmen was a beauty, but not the type of beauty suited to the plain man, for she had a temper and a passionate tongue. Her red mouth could emit scorn, and the gloss on her black hair was like the gleam of a helmet.

She looked intently at her brother.

"Well—is it settled?"

Jose unfastened his belt. He had great respect for his sister, for she had a brain as well as looks.

"This Englishman is—a complication," he said.

"Then it is true that he has come up

from the coast to bid for the Barbastro estate?"

"It seems so."

"And what does Rosario say about it?"

Her brother smiled.

"He wants me to have him arrested."

"Is it possible?"

"All things are possible, my dear, but they are not always expedient."

She gave him a sharp glance.

"Don't be pompous, Jose. Has Rosario suggested anything?"

"A share in the estate—on very easy terms."

"How much?"

"A sixth."

She watched the play of the fountain, and appeared to be doing sums in her head.

"Well—what is Rosario's idea——?"

Jose was lighting a cigar, one of Rosario's cigars.

"Yes; quite an excellent idea. This English fellow looks quarrelsome. Now, if Rosario can arrange a nice quarrel, and a scene is created and an angry crowd collects——"

"Will Rosario pick the quarrel?"

"My dear, of course not. He is too elevated."

Carmen's nostrils expressed scorn.

"He will employ somebody else?"

"Exactly. Somebody to be knocked down—in public—chairs upset—and all that. San Jeronimo does not love these foreigners. A crowd will collect."

"Rosario will arrange the crowd?"

"Yes."

"What next?"

"Well—that is where I appear. I intervene—with a couple of policemen, and I arrest—Meester Clyde."

"For assaulting a citizen?"

"No; for his own safety. I am very polite. I lodge him in the jail in order to secure him from the mob. And the mob will howl."

"Rosario will arrange the howling?"

"Rosario arranges everything."

His sister nodded her handsome head.

"He is a hero. And how long shall you keep the Englishman?"

Jose laughed and looked sly.

"Till it is safe to send him down—under escort—to Medilla."

"And that will be?"

"Some days after the sale of the Barbastro estate."

Balancing his chair on its back legs,

and with the cigar tucked into the corner of his mouth, he looked at his sister with galliard good humour. Rosario was a shrewd person, and agile, in spite of his fat. He would make a useful brother-in-law, and Carmen had a head on her shoulders—but Jose was not quite sure whether the woman in her had accepted Rosario.

"It is a good plan, and very simple," she said; "and you do not expose yourself—"

"I behave with courtesy and discretion. If questions are asked—and if that Consul fellow at Medilla gets haughty—"

"You say—that you arrested the Englishman—for his own good?"

"Exactly. The Jeronimo mob has a temper!"

"A real mob."

"Oh, that depends," said her brother. "Ours will be quite a good - tempered mob."

Hamlyn Clyde, sitting under the white awning of the Hotel Blanco, with the white square of the plaza before him under the intense blue of the sky, felt himself badly bored. He had seven whole days before him, of lounging and smoking, and drinking and sleeping, before the Barbastro estate came up for sale. He closed his eyes and opened them again at the sound of the scraping of a chair. Someone had sat down in front of him, a swarthy, round-eyed-looking ruffian, who stared. In fact, this gentleman did nothing else but stare, beginning with Clyde's head and ending with his boots, to reverse the journey. Occasionally he spat with reflective offensiveness. He was chewing some substance.

The Englishman returned the stare, and

this mutual scrutiny continued for five minutes.

Then Clyde drew up his legs.

"Anything to sell?"

"No," said the man, "I look at the animals."

"I suggest that you try the plaza for a change."

The man grinned.



"No; I look at the foreign animal. It amuses me."

Clyde had his hands in his pockets. He removed them.

"I fail to find it amusing. I shall be obliged if you will turn your chair."

"Turn your own chair," said the man.

He was in the act of getting up when Clyde hit him, and man and chair went over backwards together. Instantly, and

as though by arrangement, the arcades and doorways of the plaza disgorged figures, patriotic citizens of the republic. Men started up from tables. There was a row on, and in ten seconds Hamlyn Clyde was in the thick of it, hitting hard and fast. Men sprawled, tables and chairs were overturned, and from an upper window across the square a young woman who was smoking a cigarette watched the affair between half-closed eyelids. And it did credit to the Englishman. She had to allow him the credit.

Someone flashed a knife, and her black eyebrows came nearer together. She glanced down with sudden angry impatience.

"Jose."

But her brother was there, expecting the critical moment. She saw him hurry across the plaza with half a dozen of his men behind him. They pushed through a crowd, and Captain Zurbaran cleared a space with his sword.

He bowed to the Englishman. Meanwhile, the man who had been smitten was shouting and waving a knife, and others were shouting with him.

"He struck me. You all saw it."

"That's true, captain."

"Cannot a quiet citizen sit at a table?"

Zurbaran turned to Clyde.

"Is it true, señor? Did you strike this gentleman?"

"I did," said Clyde; "he has no manners."

"Señor, this is serious. I shall have to arrest you—"

Hamlyn looked ugly, but he did not resist. It is probable that he felt that his temper had made a fool of him, and he managed to smile at Zurbaran.

"Very well, captain. I am at your service."

They marched him across the plaza with the crowd making music behind them, and within two minutes Hamlyn Clyde was inside San Jeronimo's jail.

Now the jail was a white, square, towerlike building with small square windows. It stood next to Zurbaran's house, overtopping it, and between it and the house was a narrow, cleftlike space. A window, high up under the cornice, overlooked the flat top of Captain Zurbaran's house. There was a little square boxlike structure with a doorway on to the roof. Hamlyn Clyde was taken to a room at the top of the tower, and the

window of the room gave on to the roof of Captain Jose's house.

Half an hour before sunset Captain Jose's sister went up to walk on the roof and to enjoy the cool of the evening. Clyde had been waging war against certain voracious insects that shared the upper room with him, and he was in a particularly unpleasant temper. No one had visited him, and his hammerings on the door had been ignored.

He looked out of the window, and there—within twenty feet of him—was Jose's sister, with brilliants hanging below her sleek black hair, and a lilac-coloured cloak over her shoulders. She looked cool and vivid and haughty as she walked up and down. She seemed unaware of the fact that a man was watching her from the window of the jail.

Clyde addressed her in Spanish.

"Excuse me, senorita, but in that infernal town do they sell such a thing as insect powder?"

It could not be called an ingratiating method of address, and Carmen Zurbaran let it be understood that she was not charmed with it. She turned slowly, and with her head in the air, she examined the window and the brown and angry face framed in it. Her glance was leisurely and scornful. Then, without a word, she resumed her promenade.

Clyde's eyes seemed to sink deeper into his head. Evidently, this handsome young woman considered herself insulted by being hailed from a prison window. Her haughtiness trailed its skirts under his angry eyes.

"I beg your pardon, senorita—"

She paused sharply under the window.

"Since when has it been necessary for me to be shouted at by ruffians and the riff-raff of the town prison?"

He scowled at her.

"Well, change your house. If you must live next the town jail—"

"I live here because my brother happens to be the chief of the police, and he is responsible for the scum in there."

"Then you must see some pretty faces at this window!"

"I do," she said, looking him straight in the eyes; "but some are worse than others. If you persist in looking out of that window, I will have you moved to another cell."

By way of retort he leaned out still farther.

"A fine sunset," he said.

She began to walk up and down again, and her supple figure showed at its best when she moved. Presently, she deigned to observe that his brown head was still protruding.

"You have no manners, and a most ugly face. Am I to inform my brother that an impertinent prisoner—"

"Please do. I require an interview with the chief of the police. This cursed hole is verminous!"

"Indeed!" she said scornfully, "and what do you expect? A man of your class should not quarrel with a few insects. You must be used to them."

"I'm not."

"Indeed! So you expect a bath, and linen—and someone to wait on you."

"I expect common courtesy, and if I fail to get it—"

"Heavens!"

"There will be a most holy row, senorita."

She curled her lips at him, twitched her cloak, and proceeded to go below.

"Since I am to have no peace I will inform my brother that there is a prisoner who has not learnt to scratch himself."

When Zurbaran climbed to the upper room in the tower and had the door unlocked for him, he found Hamlyn Clyde hot and furious.

"Look here, captain, what is the meaning of all this? You arrest me, you shove me in a hole like this which is only fit for a dirty dago."

Zurbaran was smiling and bland.

"I assure you, señor, it is the best room in the jail. It has a view, and no bars to the window."

"Look here, I'm not in a humorous mood. I want to send a telegram to the English Consul at Medilla."

"Certainly, señor. You shall have a telegraph form, and the telegram shall be sent to the post-office."

"And what I want to know is—when are you going to let me out?"

Zurbaran shrugged.

"The señor is here for his own safety. San Jeronimo is a quarrelsome town, and rather quick with the knife. The señor will have to be patient."

"But, hang it, do you mean to say—"

"There will be the case of assault. Yes, I dare say a fine will settle that. But I am responsible for the señor's safety.

Your Consul at Medilla is a terrible fellow. No, the señor stays here until something can be arranged."

Clyde looked furious, but he managed to smother his temper.

"Thank you. I will send that telegram."

"Is there anything else, señor?"

"I want clean bedding, and a bath and my luggage from the hotel."

"Certainly."

"I want this hole scrubbed out."

"Of course."

"Dinner."

"Certainly. The señor shall have some dinner."

"And a tin of insect powder."

Zurbaran looked serious.

"I doubt whether San Jeronimo can provide—such a luxury."

"Luxury!" said Clyde. "Confound it! If this flea-bitten town were heaven—I should expect St. Peter to have it ready with my halo."

The captain laughed.

"Ah, but think, my dear señor, what the size of a celestial flea would be!"

So Hamlyn Clyde wrote his telegram, and prepared to accustom himself to the idea of spending a day or two in San Jeronimo's jail. Zurbaran was as good as his word. Clyde's luggage was brought over, also a dinner from the Hotel Blanco. An old tin bath and clean bedding were provided, though Clyde did not guess that the sheets came from Zurbaran's house. A grinning policeman informed him that the room would be scrubbed out next morning, and that he would go to the apothecary's for a patent powder. And Clyde, having dined and lit a cigar, sat on a rickety stool and felt somewhat appeased.

It was a gorgeous night, ablaze with stars. And then someone, a woman, began to play the piano and sing. He supposed it was the captain's sister. She had a fine voice, yes, and a devil of a temper, to judge by her eyes. Well, so had he!

The music ceased. The moon rose, and Clyde leaned out of the window and looked over the flat outlines of the town. It had a white beauty of its own, chequered with the dark foliage of trees. Then he heard a slight tapping sound, and became aware of the fact that someone was walking on the roof below.

It was Jose's sister. He saw her stand-

ing by the parapet, looking at the moon. Yes, she was a fine creature. He admired the set of her head.

She came round towards the window, and feeling more placable, Clyde thought that he might as well thank her for her brother's courtesies.

"Pardon me, senorita."

She paused, looking up.

"I have to thank you for giving my message——"

And suddenly she burst out laughing.

"I hope—the senor's—irritation——"

Her laughter would allow no more. She disappeared, taking her laughter with her into the house, and Hamlyn Clyde swore.

"Confound the woman! I haven't travelled five hundred miles to be laughed at by a Spanish jade."

But he had to allow that there was something provokingly attractive in her laughter.

A day passed, and yet another day, and Clyde was still in San Jeronimo's jail. No telegram had arrived from Medilla, and he began furiously to chafe.

Captain Zurbaran, paying a daily visit, shrugged and smiled. He could assure the senor that the telegram had gone to the post office, but he did not confess that it had not been sent off.

Carmen, the desired of fat Rosario, repaired each evening to the roof to watch the Englishman's brown face grow more savage and stormy. They were on speaking terms, but what they said to each other was neither very courteous nor very flattering. In fact, they quarrelled wholeheartedly.

"You English—you are nearly as bad as the Yankees. You are just like an Uncle Sam."

Clyde hated the Yankees, but he could think of nothing with which to compare Jose's sister, save with herself.

Nor had he yet realized the fact that he liked quarrelling with her. It was like taking an ice-cold bath.

Moreover, Jose's sister was discovering the same pleasure in quarrelling with him.

"By George," he would say to himself, "what a woman! What a mouth—what eyes! And she stings like a whip."

Carmen had begun to compare him with fat Rosario. Here was a lean, fierce eagle of a man who did not flop about like a black and overfed crow.

Two more days passed. The sale of the

Barbastro estate drew nearer, and Hamlyn Clyde still remained shut up in the tower. Two more telegrams had been dispatched, but the English Consul at Medilla continued unaccountably silent. Captain Jose still smiled, and talked of the vindictiveness of the San Jeronimo mob.

But Clyde had begun to have his suspicions. They were playing a game with him, and in all games it is essential that a man should not lose his temper. And Clyde had lost his temper.

The coming sale of the Barbastro estate became a part of his nightly quarrel with Carmen.

"The whole thing is a put-up job. I suppose that fat fellow has bribed your brother."

She did not deny it.

"All men have their failings. With some it is drink, with others—love. But in the senor's case——"

"I like your—arrogance."

"The senor's temper—is his weak point. Had the senor refused to lose his temper—he would not have been arrested."

For once he smiled at her, and she decided that she liked his smile.

"So—a man should let himself be insulted, senorita, where money is concerned——"

"What is money?"

"You would not accept a bribe, of course?"

"How dare you!"

"Well, you suggested that I ought to have let a man spit in my face."

She considered the point, and then she gave him her first smile.

"With me it would depend on the bribe."

"It would not be money."

"No."

"Senorita, I apologize."

Two more days went by, and there was a new temper in the music of their quarrelling. Each was putting intimate words to the melody. Here was a man who was a fighter among men. And Clyde was thinking of her as the most remarkable young woman he had ever met. She had a head, ambition, courage. There was nothing flabby about her. What a mate she would make for a man who had ambition.

He said: "Senorita, I do not regret the jail of San Jeronimo."

She had been playing her guitar, and

she struck a few notes, and replied mockingly:

"The senor thinks soft words will bribe a woman."

He answered her hotly.

"Words! You want deeds, do you? Well, we'll see."

For the last day or two Clyde had been considering the position of the tree that had inserted itself between the tower and the house. It was a fairly stalwart tree, overhanging the flat roof on one side, and almost touching the tower wall on the other. He decided that he would take his chance with that tree.

It was the night before the sale of the Barbastro estate, and Carmen had come up on to the roof with her guitar. Her brother was in the courtyard, smoking a cigar, and wondering whether Rosario would keep his bargain, but so far as Jose could see, all that depended upon his sister. And Carmen was up above there, teasing the Englishman.

She plucked the strings of her guitar.

"It is a pity, Senor Clyde, that you will miss the sale to-morrow. It is a fine estate, and should be a great bargain."

Her eyes were on her guitar, and she did not see the Englishman crouching—all doubled up—in the low window. But she heard the flurry of the leaves, and the cracking of branches as he made his jump into the tree. It held. He came scrambling along one of the boughs, and as it swayed and gave under his weight he managed to gain the parapet and to swing himself over.

"Excuse me," he said, "but I think that I shall be in time to attend the sale."

She laughed, but that wild jump of his had set her heart beating faster.

"Oh, I think my brother will have something to say——"

She made a quick movement, and lean-

ing over the wall, called down to Zurbaran in the courtyard.

"Senor Clyde wishes to speak to you, Jose."

Zurbaran came up, to find the Englishman and his sister looking at each other like cat and dog; but Clyde had a smile half hidden and ready, and Jose's sister was less fierce than she seemed.

"You must excuse me, captain, but the senorita's eyes were so bright that I had to jump or die——"

"Liar!" she replied. "A woman's eyes will never be so bright to you as dollars."

Clyde laughed and turned to the brother.

"Your sister does not believe in flattery. Very well, I will make a business suggestion. Why should we not make the Barbastro estate a family affair? Though I tell you quite plainly that the Barbastro estate would not have been worth a jump into that tree."

Jose looked at his sister.

"A family affair!"

"Well, there are three of us. I can put down the money. Of course, two-thirds of the estate will belong to the Senora Clyde and myself, but we shan't grudge a third of it to our brother."

He bowed to Carmen Zurbaran.

"How's that for a stroke of business?"

"Hopeless," she said, with her head in the air.

"It is not enough?"

"Just dollars."

He went near and looked her steadily in the eyes.

"Senorita, we quarrel very nicely. It will always prevent one from being bored. But if you think that I jumped into that tree merely for dollars——"

Zurbaran's cigar had gone out. He remembered that he had left his matches below, and he went in search of those matches.

¶ "A holiday in itself."—*Yorkshire Post*.

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CASELL'S

Is Modern Youth Spoilt?

(38)

By WARWICK DEEPING

BEFORE dealing with so plausible a generalisation as the above, one ought to admit the obvious fact that the world demands more than it did. It demands more amusement, more movement, more money, more fresh air, and to demand such things is to express vitality. It is a sign of youth and of health. A healthy baby or child should be a little autocrat, eager to suck and to clutch. A sick baby is passive or plaintive, or both. In such a case we call in the doctor.

Now youth is not passive—or it should not be passive. It is full of itself. It wants this and that. It is alive with the urge towards self-expression, and since modern life is more full of opportunities for self-expression, the youth of the day demands more.

That is how I see it.

Youth is both spoilt and not spoiled.

A Child as Rival?

For, to begin with, it depends upon how we look at youth: whether we regard it as a child to be humoured or as a rival to be resented.

Youth provokes hostility. Few people are impartial, especially those who have not succeeded very well in the great game. I think it is these people who have failed—in the human and the spiritual sense—who grudge youth its youth.

Don't we all know these people? They are the old men and old women of all ages to whom youth, and success, and the newness of anything are an offence. The young people are not what—they—were. The world has grown greedy and selfish. Morals have deteriorated. Nobody works as they used to work. Modern art is debased. Modern novels are either nasty or trash.

Yes, we know these people, the little, shrunken, envious old men and women—young and old—who sit in their corners and

try to pull life to pieces. Somehow, they have failed—and they may know it. They are jealous of all that insurgent youth that is pressing on past them in their corners. Youth ignores this jealous, grumbling senility. It goes its own way. It is alive.

Children in Subjection

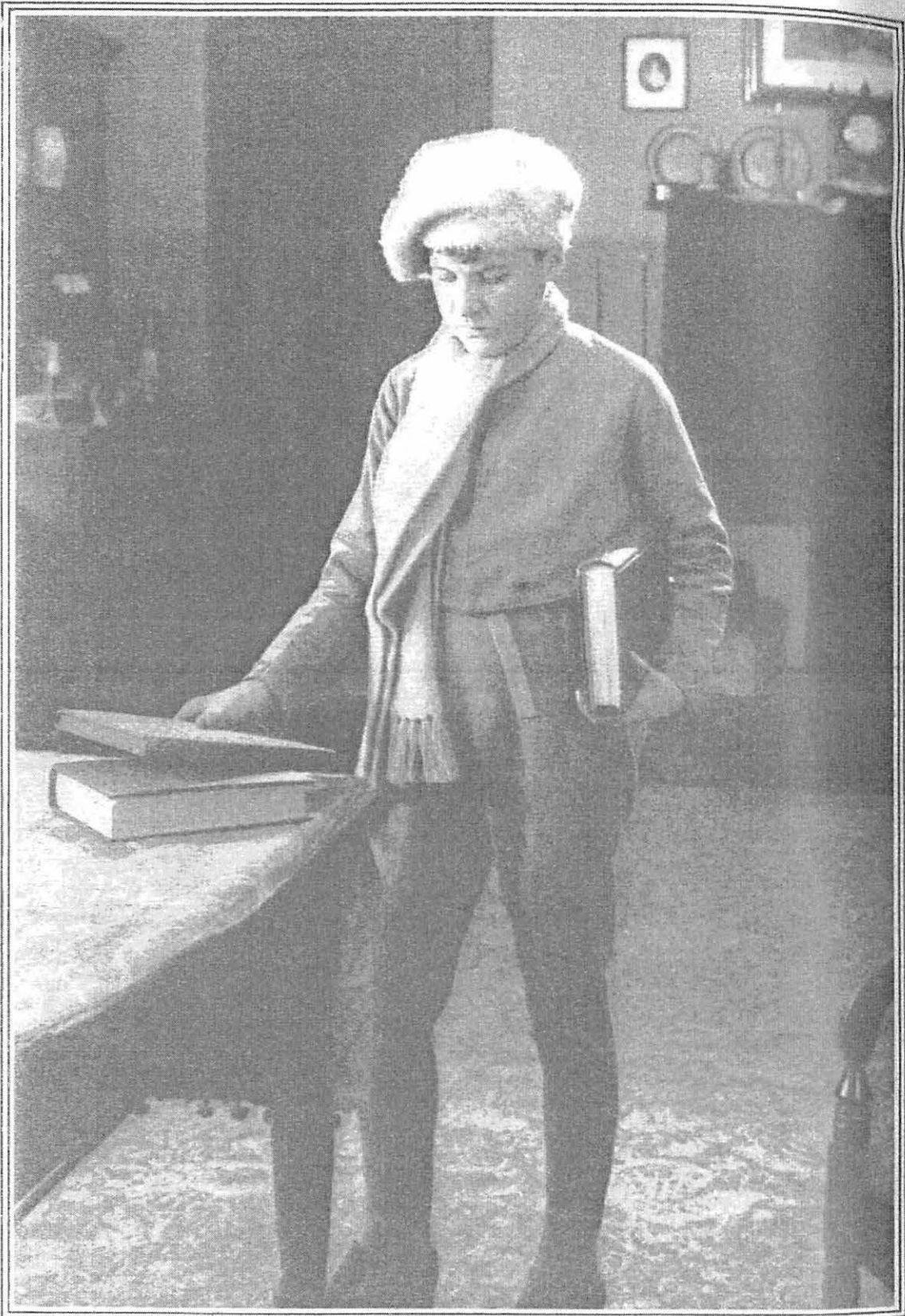
Subservience—in others—is supposed to save us both time and trouble, and the Victorian parents saved time and leisure by keeping their children in subjection. Quite right in a way, but the Victorians overdid it, and the reaction has, perhaps, swung too far in the other direction. Some of the young things of to-day acquire their toys with too little effort—which may be their misfortune and not their fault.

Considered with broad and kindly fairness, the youth of to-day seems to me very likeable. It is more intelligent in that its natural curiosity has suffered from less repression. It is more tolerant, more wise. I should judge it to be far less absorbed in sex than were the previous generations, because—in spite of the provincial prudes of both sexes—so much more fresh air has been let into the sex world. We keep our windows open more in every way.

Which reminds me of an incident. My wife and I were having lunch in a glass-fronted chalet up in the Swiss mountains. It was cold. The doors were shut. And into this glass-house blew two young gentlewomen in breeches and much coloured wool. They had been ski-ing.

They exclaimed, "My lord, what a fug!" They banged the doors open. They did not ask us whether we were conscious of a fug, or whether we liked it. And mutely—for a minute or two—we accepted the draught.

That incident seems to symbolise modern youth's chief lapse. It is—on occasions—too abrupt; it throws doors open, or bangs them.

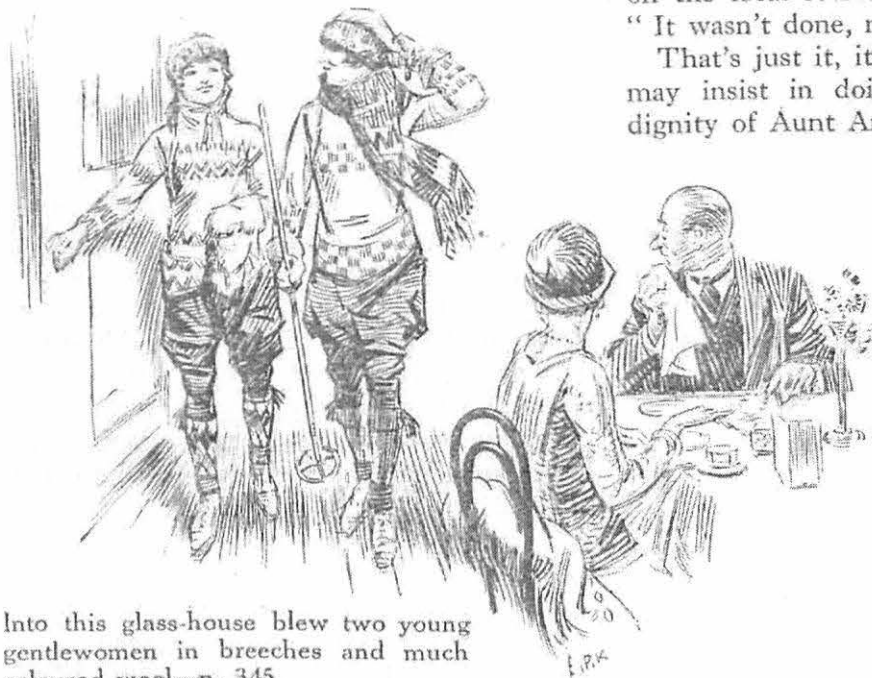


Studios Youth of Another Day

Facing life from the background of a simple Scottish home in the days before the motor-car and the wireless. A screen view of the boy Livingstone. Has youth altered since then?

Hero Films Ltd. Production.

It is a little too absorbed in getting its own way. It is rather too ready to ignore the old fusters. But weren't some of us just like that—in our bad moments—when we were young? Understanding—and the fine courtesy that comes of understanding—are the products of suffering. The sensitive child attains early to that consideration for others, because it has suffered. Youth learns as it grows older—and suffers, though always there will remain the greedy, bull-headed children of five and of sixty who have never grown up into the spirit of understanding.



Into this glass-house blew two young gentlewomen in breeches and much coloured wool—p. 345

Some of us see youth as a kind of fixed figure, a young thing scorching in a car, or wearing an eyeglass, or making-up its face in public, or dancing nigger dances. To see it wilfully as a fixed figure, just twenty years or so in age, and to damn it, is both futile and absurd. One has to look back and on. Youth is a period, a phase—a time when the sap is rising strongly. It was something else, and will be something else. It must put out its green wood to flower and to fruit.

Differences are Inevitable

Also, to condemn differences just because they are differences may be human, but it is not just. Are we middle-aged people of to-day no different from the middle-aged of fifty years ago? Good heavens, are we not, and thankfully so! And would those Victorian middle-aged approve of us? Would they? Shouldn't we appear to them as nasty, priggish, impertinent, precocious children,

horribly irreligious, with no fixed ideas? I think so. And we should be inclined to regard them as stuffy, pompous humbugs.

Youth is relative. Plenty of the stuffy people still survive. They don't approve. They sniff or wail. They refuse to recognise the inevitable differences, though so many of the differences are not fundamental. There are minds that still like wool mats and Christmas cards and skirts that trail in the dust, and servants who would live contentedly in cellars and have one evening off once a month. Fancy your cook playing lawn-tennis on the local recreation ground! Horrible! "It wasn't done, my dear, in my day."

That's just it, it wasn't done. But youth may insist in doing new things, and the dignity of Aunt Antimacassar is offended.

One of the most frequent condemnations of modern youth takes the form of declaring that the youth of to-day has no sense of reverence. Possibly, in moments of heat or of sententiousness one has made this charge in person.

But then one asks, what is reverence? Or what do we mean by reverence when we accuse modern youth of lacking it? Isn't it that we are resenting the criticism of the young,

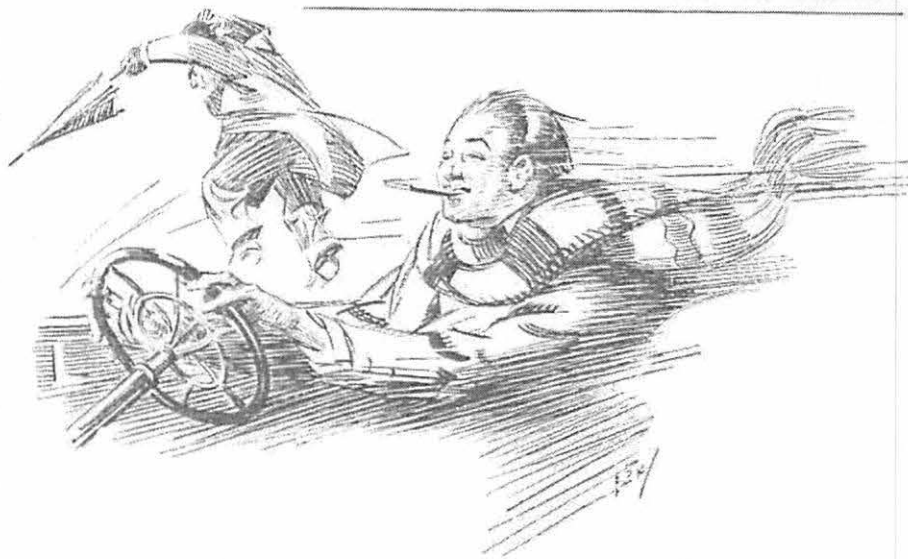
criticism either of ourselves or of our views, or of our art? Liking life dressed up in a particular fashion, we are apt to be offended when some young thing ridicules our fashions. We accuse youth of irreverence. While we in our young days were just as irreverent, though perhaps less frankly so.

Criticism will always be with us, and much of the so-called irreverence of youth is youth's criticism of ourselves and our foibles and our institutions. The autocratic parent may attempt to produce an apparent reverence by exerting authority, but he or she has produced silence and not assent. Youth's live, questioning self has been shut up in a cupboard, and neither love nor reverence flourish inside dark cupboards. Each generation has to face the criticism of the generation that follows, and it will meet it most successfully and most honestly by showing a frank and friendly face to the young. We have to win youth by convincing

it, not by shouting at it. We meet it by being young with that eternal wise youthfulness that can both tease and be tender. We have to remember that because we preceded our sons and daughters by some thirty years in the sequence of time, we were not granted the right to appear infallible.

Also, let those who accuse modern youth of being spoilt, sit down and decide who has been responsible for the spoiling.

I think the question answers itself. To those who have ceased to be young in mind and in heart, youth has the appearance of being selfish and self-assertive. But to those who retain some youthfulness, the young are



Some of us see youth as a kind of fixed figure, a young thing scorching in a car—

the same lovable, exasperating creatures that they have always been. If we love them we are able to say that they are cutting their capers, and learning—just as we did. And if we understand them, and can be friends with them, they come to us gladly, and we are not made conscious of being middle-aged.

Besides, youth is drawn to the happy people. When we have lost our own youth we have lost the young.

Taking Care of Itself

The young generation can take care of itself. It is far less crude than many previous generations, and youth must have its crudities. I have no quarrel with its manners. Meet it with naturalness and you will not be insulted. In fact, naturalness seems to me to be one of the chief virtues of the youth of to-day, and that is perhaps why it offends the stiff-jointed among its elders. It is an open-air generation. It plays hard; it demands more play, but the hard player can be the hard worker. If it demands more from life, isn't that a sign of vitality and of progress? Life is hunger.

Let us be careful how we cast our stones, for the elderly critic lives in his house of glass. He likes his comforts and his little luxuries, and never was life more comfortable. Look at the modern armchair. To sit in such a chair, and to issue condemnations may be so easy, a sort of after-dinner relaxation.

Youth has its problems before it. It is our business to help.



—or making-up its face in public—p. 346



39

Woman's Journal (Sydney, NSW : 1850 - 1932), Thursday 19 November 1908, page 28

WOMAN'S PAGE



52

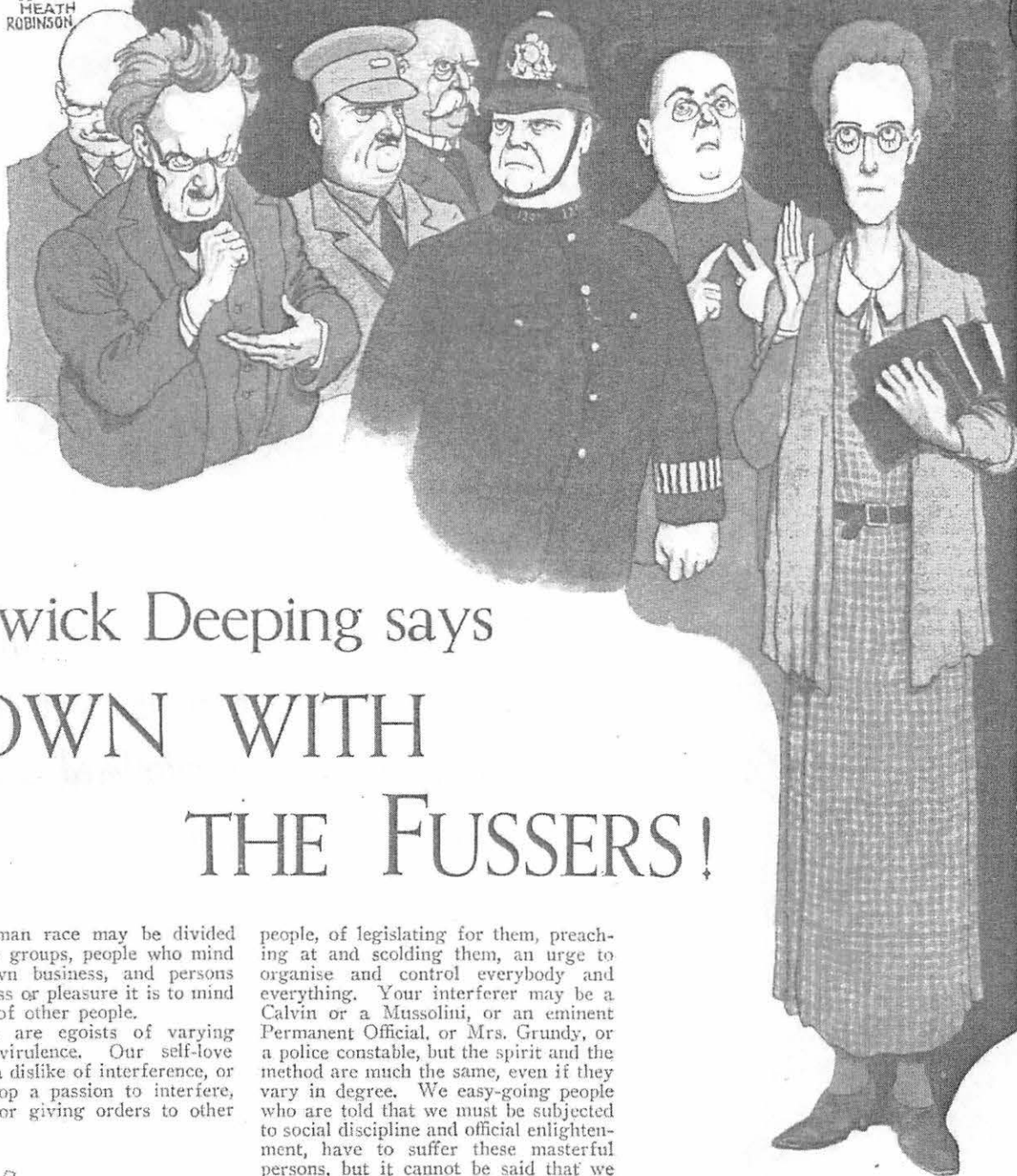
In a discussion in "M.A.P." on the subject of "At what Age is Woman at Her Best," a few of Mr. Warwick Deeping's ideas on the matter are most interesting. Mr. Deeping, a very rising author, whose mediæval romances have met with wide appreciation, is, by the way, one of the few examples of medical men turned novelist. He says: "The bud has not the perfume of the fully-opened flower. At the age of thirty a woman appears to me to be at her zenith. If she has beauty, she has learned by then the full value of her mirror. She should also have perfected the delicate cult of clothes. Only a woman of thirty knows the infinite need of taste and care in all æsthetic 'details.' Her charm of womanliness, too, should be at its June, neither a hard bud, nor an over-blown rose, but warm and compact still with the heart half hidden, still giving a sense of mystery unrevealed. Charm is a woman's perfume. One can hardly define or analyse its elusiveness. But its absence is too soon discovered.

"At thirty a woman should be equally interesting in soul and face. She is mature, but not too mature. The brilliance of youth

but not too mature. The brilliance of youth still brightens the sensitive surface of her personality. She has won the talisman of tact, if it is ever to be hers. She is old enough to have experienced things, old enough to think, without being too near to the perilous and set frosts of her later forties.

"At thirty a woman should make a divine mother, for she is young enough to be young with her children, but wise enough to teach them. At thirty she should not have sighted a possible world of pettiness, garrulity, and gossip.

"It seems to me that the Greeks conceived their Goddesses to be of some such age. Artemis, Venus, Pallas, neither twenty or forty years will serve for them. Let us call them the Goddesses of thirty."

W
HEATH
ROBINSON

Warwick Deeping says DOWN WITH THE FUSSERS!

THE human race may be divided into two groups, people who mind their own business, and persons whose business or pleasure it is to mind the business of other people.

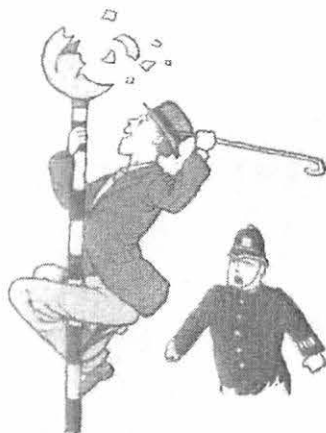
All of us are egoists of varying degrees of virulence. Our self-love may include a dislike of interference, or it may develop a passion to interfere, a fondness for giving orders to other

people, of legislating for them, preaching at and scolding them, an urge to organise and control everybody and everything. Your interferer may be a Calvin or a Mussolini, or an eminent Permanent Official, or Mrs. Grundy, or a police constable, but the spirit and the method are much the same, even if they vary in degree. We easy-going people who are told that we must be subjected to social discipline and official enlightenment, have to suffer these masterful persons, but it cannot be said that we love them or regard them as permanently inevitable.

We have to recognise the thirst for power, and the passion to exercise it. Now, power may be exercised either upon things or upon people. Power exercised upon our material environment can be creative and useful, power exercised upon people may be discouraging and repressive.

In this essay we are concerned with the social significance of a particular sort of person, the man or woman who not only exercises power, but applies it as an irritant. Counter-irritation, as the doctors call it, may have its uses, but irritation perpetually applied produces inflammation. The body social has rebelled on many occasions against such irritants. Thus, Wat Tyler's Kentish men hunted up all clerks and hanged them, a clerk being a lawyer or

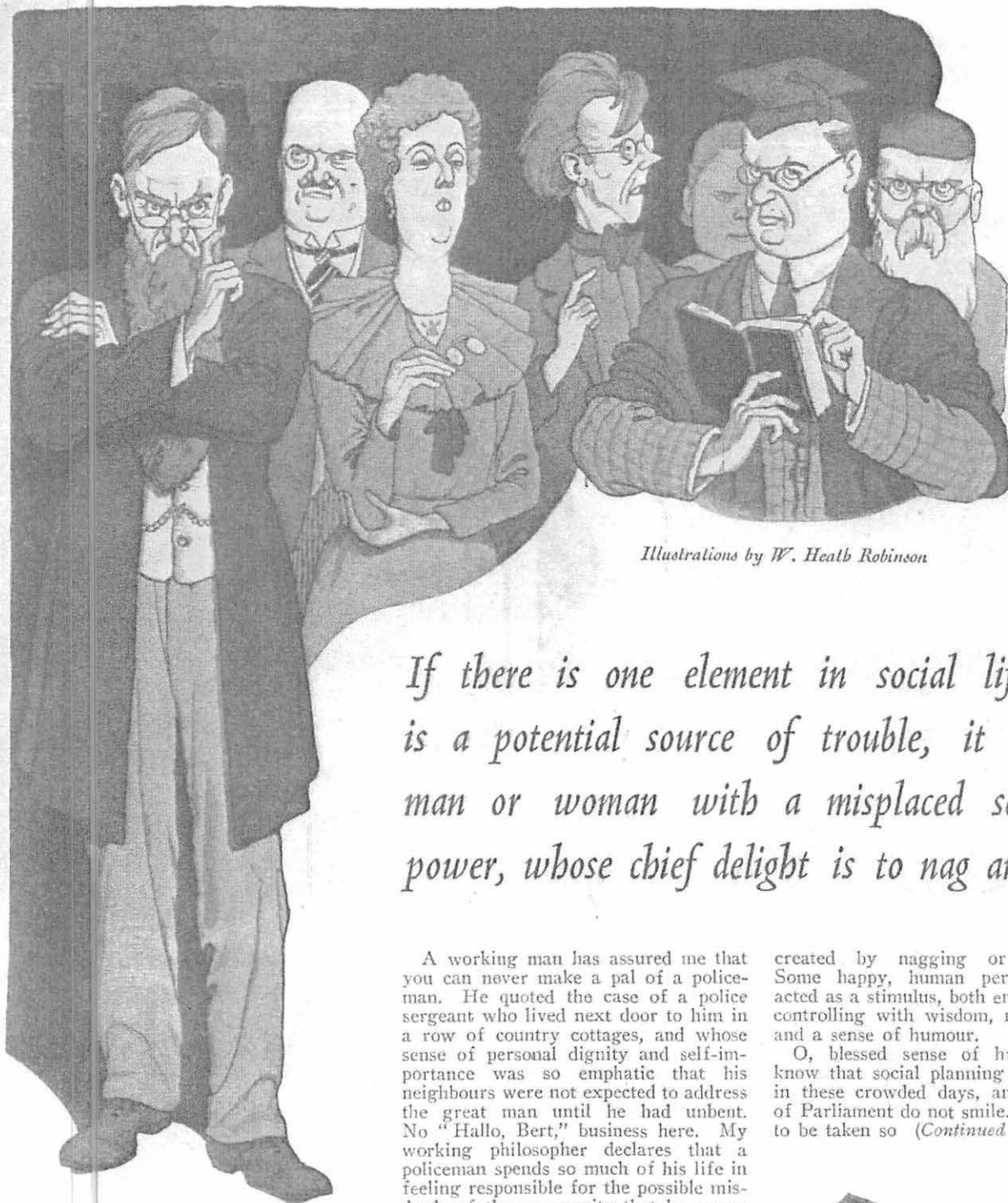
"The human race may be persons who mind their whose pleasure it is to mind



"The eternal child in us may wish to smash Belisha beacons, and, of course, authority is then peeved"

official. England rejoiced with Charles II after the dictatorship of a Cromwell and the perversities of the Puritans. The French ended by guillotining their terrorists.

On several occasions British and Colonial troops were mutinous after the armistice. The professional soldier, seeing an end to the period of his power, became in some cases a parade-ground pedant. In one case the three battalions of a Brigade issued a manifesto "If this Spit and Polish Stunt does not stop, we down arms." Another brigade refused to move from its billets. Red Hats were shocked and a



Illustrations by W. Heath Robinson

If there is one element in social life that is a potential source of trouble, it is the man or woman with a misplaced sense of power, whose chief delight is to nag and fuss

divided into two groups—
own business and persons
other people's business "

little scared.' I myself can remember feeling as mutinous as the men. We rather thought we were ceasing to be soldiers, having done the job, and some of us said so with a disgraceful frankness that caused Authority to treat us as responsible creatures. And was it not the anger of the rank and file that persuaded those in authority at home to cease from starving German women and children?

Why does John Smith go out upon occasions and drink more beer than is good for him? Because the permanent official in the home may have been exercising too caustic a tongue.

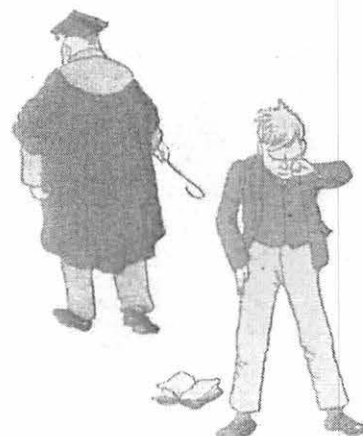
A working man has assured me that you can never make a pal of a policeman. He quoted the case of a police sergeant who lived next door to him in a row of country cottages, and whose sense of personal dignity and self-importance was so emphatic that his neighbours were not expected to address the great man until he had unbent. No "Hallo, Bert," business here. My working philosopher declares that a policeman spends so much of his life in feeling responsible for the possible misdeeds of the community that he ceases to be a normal man. A point of view, perhaps, if a little exaggerated.

I have another friend, who, whenever a lightning strike occurs, asks "What was the weather like, or who nagged the men?" Heat-waves can produce social irritability. Little scolds in authority, manikins with mosquito minds, can be responsible for attacks of scratching, or for a pruritus produced by the unsympathetic exercise of power. Yes, find the nagger.

Regarded psychologically, forces that depress and discourage are bad both for the spirit and the flesh. Man, and woman, will flourish and bloom on a little kindly praise. A gay guest at a party may prove the worried hostess' salvation. Who has not heard of the happy ship, the cheerful business-house, the good school? Such things are not,

created by nagging or repression. Some happy, human personality has acted as a stimulus, both energising and controlling with wisdom, magnanimity, and a sense of humour.

O, blessed sense of humour! We know that social planning is necessary in these crowded days, and that Acts of Parliament do not smile. They have to be taken so (Continued on page 103)



"Say to the repressor, 'Boys will be boys,' and he will reply, 'Not at all. It is a problem in psychology' "

and anyway, such agitations would not be likely to produce great results. The Church is not run for profit; it simply is not able to increase the stipends of its clergy on a large scale.

On the other hand, it is very hard for a clergyman in his present circumstances to lower his standard of life. A doctor who found his house too big for him would leave it. A clergyman cannot do this, he must live in the vicarage assigned to him, and if he is to keep it from going wholly to ruin he must employ at least one servant and gardener. Indeed, he cannot do all his own gardening; it would take up too much of his time. Nor should his wife do all her own house-work. She, too, has her duties in the parish, and very important ones. She must visit the people, help with the Women's Institute, the Sunday school, the running of parish Nursing Fund, organise fêtes, preside at committees. In addition to this, she has to look after her children and contrive that they and she should be dressed in a manner fitting their position.

All this means that the clergyman is a great deal poorer than many people with less money. His necessary expenditure is too big for his income; he has nothing left over for extras. If his wife is ill so that he needs extra help in the house, he cannot pay for it. The money has gone on painting the stairs. He needs a book for a course of sermons he is giving; the money has gone on paying the gardener. He has not had a holiday for four years and is thoroughly stale; there is no money for a holiday. At every turn his life is hampered by the effort to live on a scale too big for his means. His position is indeed difficult. It is very regrettable, too, for it impairs his efficiency and interferes with his doing his work properly.

The clergy come in for a great deal

of criticism. People say that their sermons are dull, that they do not visit their parishioners, that they do not keep pace with modern ideas, that they trail lackadaisically through their duties as though they were the slaves of some meaningless routine, not the apostles of an inspiring gospel. These things are sometimes true—though nothing like as often as people like to make out. But if they are true, it is less the fault of the clergy than of their circumstances. A clergyman is not made of steel and stone; like other men, he is flesh and blood and subject to its weaknesses. How can he keep his spirit fiery, when it is for ever weighed down by wondering where he will be able to find the money for John's education, for Jane's wages? How can he keep his sympathy fresh to enter into the problems of other people's lives when his nerves are strained by the problems of his own? Above all, how can he, without time or money to spare, satisfy the intellectual demands of his profession?

To take in new ideas and to develop one's own is hard work, for which a man must keep his mind in good condition. He certainly will not be able to, if he is tired; nor if he is worried. In order to concentrate properly, he must be undistracted by petty cares. Moreover, very few people can think out their opinions completely on their own; they need to be stimulated by other people. This means they need periods in which they can meet other people interested in the same subjects as themselves, who will throw new light on these subjects, discuss them from a different point of view. A clergyman's circumstances often make it very hard for him to have any of these thoughts. He is always tired, always worried by the petty cares, he has not the money to go on holidays where he can meet other men

who will discuss with him. The consequence is that his mind tends inevitably to narrow and grow dry.

It is disastrous for the Church. It is also disastrous for the world. Nowadays we are living in an intellectual chaos; there are no generally accepted views about how to live and what to do, so that people cannot make up their minds to do anything. In a world of poverty, war and misery, Communists squabble with Fascists, Socialists with Individualists, Nationalists with Internationalists. All these points of view have their merits, but each is too limited to solve all problems. Fascists do not recognise the good in patriotism, Nationalists do not realise the paramount importance of peace, Communists and Fascists deny the significance of the individual, Individualists the need of co-operation. Only one philosophy faces the whole problem, recognises the valuable thing in every aspect of human nature—Christianity. Christianity is still far and away the fullest and most sensible explanation of life, the truest guide to conduct. Most people agree with this in practice even if they do not in theory. For when they describe their ideal of a good man, they describe a Christian character, self-sacrificing, peaceful, brave and humane, expecting the most of himself and not too much of other people.

Yet official Christianity is losing its hold, and it is doing so mainly because people do not understand it because it is not expounded to them clearly in the language of to-day. This should be the duty of its official professors—the clergy. But as we have seen, they are often not in a position to do it. Over-worked, distracted, underpaid, it is as much as they can do to carry on at all. Christianity remains unexplained and humanity sinks farther into confusion.

DOWN WITH THE FUSSERS!

(Continued from page 11)

seriously and without laughter. They are so full of negation. Repression is negation. Your repressors insist so much upon their authority that they can become like corks bottling up the joy of life. When we are feeling happily foolish they tell us not to be silly.

There are times when we are moved to be foolish, and when foolishness is good for the soul. The eternal child in us breaks out and turns the nursery upside down. We may wish to dance in the middle of the road, and smash Belisha beacons, and of course authority is peeved with us. Yet, man does not ask to be an educated ant, the horrible product of an official factory.

They are so efficient, too, these repressive people. They would so order life that no one would be permitted to make a mistake. They would like to insist upon our walking on one side of the pavement. We are to drink, not when we feel thirsty, but when the official clock marks the appropriate hour. There might be no end to this regimentation, did not the obstinate and happy brute in man sometimes insist upon making a cheerful muddle of things. Our salvation may lie in our being able to make glorious asses of ourselves, and of locking authority up in the schoolroom.

I can remember a body of Canadian soldiers marching off to embark for France, and as they marched they sang, "We won't, we won't, we won't be bogged about," and a sarcastic regular soldier at my elbow remarked, "They won't sing that sort of song after we have had them in hand for a month."

I can remember the disgust on plain

men's faces when some distinguished Official Nagger arrived, and by way of being helpful began to make trouble for everybody. "Why this, why that?" How the men loved an officer who could bluff the nagger and fool him with quick wits!

That is another of our troubles when dealing with Naggers. They resent being answered, especially if the answer is reasonable and adequate. They do not want to discuss a subject; they desire to deliver a lecture. Any retort is an impertinence. I am told by my wife that I know nothing of domestic nagging. I salute her and agree, but one does divine the discords in less happy households, and I would say to all naggers, male and female, "You may think that you are giving your mate advice. Believe me, you are not. You are giving him indigestion."

"Let us pray together" may be a good text, but "Let us laugh and play together" may be more helpful when gloomy prophets afflict us. Let us dare to be jocund, positive people, not mere negations. England muddles through. The very efficient people may cast that reproach in our teeth, and tell us how much more rationally and precisely the world will be run when the power is theirs, but if the very efficient people become too prevalent we shall rise in our wrath and attach them to lamp posts. There are times when we want to do the things that Miss Aguecheek says that it is not good for us to do, but these things may be good for us just because we do them. It is better to create than to criticise. It is better to make a positive muddle of something, than to stand still and find fault. There may be health and

secret wisdom in happy fooling.

Say to the repressor, "Boys will be boys," and he will reply, "Not at all. It is just a problem in practical psychology. Boys should be regarded as young persons in Form So & So, and scheduled under Intelligence Group Number So & So. Their heredity has been explored, their teeth inspected, their eyes tested, and when we have sufficiently administered the little beasts. . . ." Yes, very necessary and admirable much of it, no doubt, but our quarrel with the repressors is not that they do these things for our good, but because they themselves like doing these things to us. They are superior people and it is their prerogative to exercise authority.

Do we in England quite realise that our freedom is our most precious possession, and that no other country in the world is as free as ours? As a little Italian waiter said to me, "This is the only country in the world in which you can say what you please without being arrested or stabbed in the back." We have had no Terror in this country. We may suffer from the usual frailties of human nature, and the injustices of a society that is imperfect just because it is gradual and progressive. Let us cherish this most precious freedom and defend it against all Dictators and Naggers, domestic and otherwise. It may be necessary to plan and to order life for the benefit of the many, but let us insist upon doing our own planning and of making our own mistakes and learning from them, instead of handing over our souls to some body of experts whose depressing department might be described as The Ministry of Interference.

My ADVICE to a

*The first of a series of
articles touching on
modern life as it affects
the different ages*

(4)

IN one of her books Jane Austen describes the transformation that occurs when the child becomes woman. It is an amusing description, and almost sufficiently frank to satisfy the moderns. That which had been an irresponsible, noisy, dirty and distinctly mendacious young she-boy changed into a creature of self-conscious fastidiousness and dignity, who was seriously concerned about the cut of her clothes and the niceness of her person. She was demure; her voice became soft; she could blush. No longer did she rush about, a little screaming sloven, with no consideration for hair, petticoats or stockings. The little savage had become self-consciously woman.

Jane Austen's picture is a hundred years or more old, and yet in some of its features remains a picture for all time. It portrays a metamorphosis, both physical and spiritual, a girl's realization of sex and of self.

Feeling posed by the problem that had been set me I asked the father of two stalwart daughters, aged fourteen and sixteen:

"What would you tell your girls about life?"

He looked both bothered and whimsical.

"My dear chap, can I tell them anything? I'm Victorian, a foggy."

I persisted.

"But—what would—you tell them?"

He reflected.

"Oh, the old verities, I suppose, the old values. They still matter—in spite of modernism and the Monkey Hill. After all—we older people aren't absolute fools."

I laughed, for he had uttered the very words that were in my mind. Moreover, I could reply to him—"Nor are the young things fools. They judge our values by what we make of them."

And what are these values?

What has the girl of sixteen, seventeen or eighteen to say upon beauty, upon the pride of a nice self-regard, upon love, upon loyalty to some ideal, upon physical fitness and its counterpart—mental health?

She may have a very great deal to say. She may be very sensitive to beauty, without

being able to define her reactions. She has her feelings about love, and if she is sensitive to beauty—she will wish love to be a beautiful thing. Having more freedom than her mother had, she will be more a creature of games and of the open air. The tennis court and the hockey field teach her certain things. She meets life in the open. She may assume that she has a career before her as a major or a minor star. She dreams of adventure as boys were supposed to dream of it fifty years ago. She may see herself running a hat shop, or becoming a film actress, or playing at Wimbledon, or practising medicine, or flying an aeroplane across the Atlantic.

The Victorian Girl

I suppose that the life of the Victorian girl was more inward. The life of the modern girl is more outward, given to external things, material activities, physical self-expression. We are apt to speak of the life of the Victorian girl as being cramped, stilted and artificial. This new freedom is supposed to produce something more frank and sincere and natural. It does—but it is also in danger of producing a certain hardness. One sees too many little empty faces, bald foreheads, plucked eyebrows, shallow eyes, hard mouths. This type of girl does not strike one as being woman. What sort of lover, wife, mother would she make? For, after all, life cannot get along without love and comradeship and motherhood.

By all means let us be physically fit, out-of-door people, hikers, gardeners, players of games, but let us not run away with the illusion that these physical things are the whole of life. One must be more than a nice shell or a rubber ball or an apple with a lovely skin. The surface of life is excellent, but if we forget the core, the surface is apt to be nothing but surface.

Girl of Seventeen

By

WARWICK DEEPING



It is not fashionable to speak of souls, but the word soul does express that which is sacramental or should be so in every secret self.

I would say to the girl of seventeen :

"Don't be afraid to have ideals. Don't be laughed out of them, or be sneered out

of them by cheap cynicism. Remember that there is a difference between ideals and illusions. Remember—too—that the people who fight for and retain ideals are the successful people and that the cynics are the failures.

Try and be fastidious, especially in love. Love is worth it.

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Try to understand yourself and other people.

Beware of cheap cleverness.

When you are sure of love, love with all your heart and soul and strength.

Don't be afraid of giving. If your love is worth while it will give back to you.

There is nothing more potent in the world than a wise gentleness, with emphasis on the wise. Your comrade, if he is wise and you have chosen wisely, will bless you for your gentleness.

Don't run away with the notion that business or a career are going to fill the whole of your life, unless you happen to be a genius.

Don't let your text be—"I just want to have a good time." You will and you won't. Good times have to be worked for.

Don't set out to make yourself an imitation boy. It is a poor product, and sloppy trousers are not impressive. They have their uses, but when converted into a complete cult they are just silly. A well-cut short skirt can put any pair of trousers to shame.

A Pride Worth Cultivating

Be proud of your person. Take care of your hair and your skin and your teeth. Be clean, even fastidiously clean. Take a pride in your clothes, and cultivate a nice taste in them. I can remember the days when a woman who powdered her nose was regarded as an immoral person. But what virtue is there in ugliness, or in a wrinkled and weather-worn skin? Such matters may depend upon one's life and its environment. A woman may be pleasing to the eye, especially to the inner eye, at sixty as well as at sixteen. She has taken care both of skin and soul. If people find you good to look at, let that be a matter of pride and not of mere vanity.

Looking well helps a woman to feel well.

Don't read too much, or believe all the things you read in books, especially in the highbrow books. The people who write such books are sometimes too clever to be correct.

Don't talk too much. Women can make a misery of the sound of the human voice.

Try to see the good in other people. It may not be so interesting as finding fault, but it is much more gracious and cheerful.

Remember that there is a quality called

dignity, and that youth has a dignity of its own.

Don't be afraid of enthusiasm. It gets you there, while the superior people are sitting still and sneering.

Learn to rest and to relax, that is to say—work hard, play hard, rest hard. At seventeen you may not realize it, but an hour's relaxation and solitude are food to a woman. She should try to build this hour into the house of her life.

Don't rush to the aspirin bottle when you feel a bit off. Find out why you are feeling like that and correct the cause.

Realize that life gives us all hard knocks. Keep your head up, and try to smile. No one loves a whimperer, and a whimpering woman is the devil.

Finally, try and be kind to your parents. They may appear at times to be tiresome and boring people, but they may love you. It is difficult for generations to understand each other, but they should try and exercise gentleness and a kind tolerance. Your father may seem to be an interfering old codger, but his chief sin may be that he loves you and doesn't want to see you hurt.

Your Life's Comrade

As for your life's comrade, if you wish to choose such a comrade, beware of the egoist, the clever cad, the too-good-looking fellow. Watch a man's eyes. If he is a little shy of you and his love, so much the better. Choose kindness, good health, good temper. Beware of a man who chatters or who shows off. Avoid both the sloven and the dude.

Remember, there are no strong, silent men. The men who appear such may be just dull, and stupid, and perhaps surly.

It is not a sin to love one's self. We all love our selves, but in different ways and for different reasons. If you love yourself with pride, wisdom and understanding, you will be able to give these qualities to some other love.

Don't be misled by the outcry against marriage.

Both man and woman find their fullest happiness and freedom in a happy marriage. There are many happy marriages, but such happiness has to be worked for. It is the apple you cultivate, not the wild crab of the hedgerow.

Look out for the next article in this series—addressed to a young man of eighteen, by J. D. BERESFORD

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Father and Son

By

WARWICK DEEPING

(Author of "Sorrell & Son")



A recent portrait of Warwick Deeping whose novels have raised him to the front rank of the world's story-tellers

Photo: Lizzie Caswall Smith

THIS civilisation of ours is man-made. It is man's creation, conceived and imposed upon the nature of things.

In the early days it was Nature who ruled. She said: "Beget, go forth and multiply. Conquer and kill. The earth is to those who multiply and are cunning."

But through the centuries man has been conceiving and creating. He ceased to be wholly the child of blind, mysterious urges. He became self-conscious man, self-conscious as husband and as father. Slowly we have created our human relationships; they are as much our creations, and as willed, as our buildings and our bridges and our aeroplanes.

All this is obvious, but what we forget is that now—to-day and to-morrow—we are creating society, altering, remodelling, beautifying. Nothing remains as it was, and this human relationship of ours, love, marriage, fatherhood are changing.

We plan. We will. And more and more consciously do we do these things.

Making a Mess of Relationship

Yet, what a mess do some of us continue to make of these human relationships! What a mess is made of marriage, of fatherhood and sonship! Some of us still act out of our primæval, tribal selves. We may be moderns in our engineering, in our music, in our science, but when it comes to matters of the heart we behave like the "old man" of the tribe, the primæval tyrant. We give away our plan, and our self-conscious creating, and run amuck among the old instinctive urges. Need it be so? Is man no more than body, a mass of behaviour, the creature of his endocrine glands? Can we not plan and will?

My Father

Life is a personal affair, vividly and poignantly personal. If I utter the word "father," I do not call up the vision of any man; I see my father. Once again I am the little fellow looking up at the big fellow. He was the first man I knew. The dead are with us, and in these later years I seem to see my father more clearly and understandingly than when I was a younger man. I see him as he must have seen me in the greater wisdom of his years. One learns by looking back.

I remember a day when my father was dead, and my mother and I were looking through old letters and papers, and I came upon a poem of my father's written upon me when I was a little fellow of three or so. Strange to stand and look at your small self through your father's eyes, and to realise the mystery of life as he saw it in you! My father asked questions. What would this little fellow become? What would he make of life?

It is very clear to me now that my father was one of those men who had a plan. He had an ideal, and he willed himself towards it

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through the busy years of his life. He did not merely "behave." He was what one used to call a religious man; that is to say, his plan was the Christ plan, and the pattern of it was evident through all his living. With him religion was not gloom and repression; it was a sunny outlook, compassionate and happy. He believed in self-restraint, and there is all the difference in the world between self-discipline and repression.

But a plan is not a mere pattern on paper. It is alive, and a man has to live it, and my father lived it, and when I look back I realise how successfully he did so.

A Happy Childhood

I was a happy child, and I owe that happiness to my parents. They lived out their plan, and I—the little fellow—began my life by living it with them in that little, old Georgian house overlooking the sea. My father was a busy doctor, my mother the busy housewife of those days.

I loved my father. To me he was a very great man, yet human and mortal. Somehow I seemed to know that my father was mortal. I can remember moments of childish panic when I was afraid that something had happened to him. They used horses in those days, and sometimes when he was late I would go out and stand in the road and listen for the sound of horse's hoofs rounding the end of the terrace, and when—at last—I heard them I would rush in to my mother.

"He's coming."

Simple, sensitive reactions! And perhaps we can count ourselves fortunate if some of this simplicity remains with us in the force of our years. Reading a review of the film of "Sorrell & Son" I was gently amused by the gibe "This father and son business which is so prevalent in second-class English fiction." Why should love be second-class? Why, if you have had a first-class father should it be shameful and second-class to say so? Why should the belief in something be a sign of literary sottishness? To be a highbrow must one question everything and end by believing in nothing?

For, to begin with, what better heritage can a child receive from its parents than physical health and happiness and faith in those same parents? It is better to begin with faith. No man who has had a happy childhood can be wholly disillusioned, nor can good memories be taken from him. He will have the memories of the little fellow who looked up to the big fellow and was not

disappointed. He will remember those boyish episodes, the first going to school, that anguishing moment when the school-house door closed, and the father was gone, for three months, three everlasting months. He will remember those occasional thrashings wisely and compassionately given. He will remember pulling up his little pants and looking up tearfully at the great man.

"I'm sorry, Dad."

"That's all right, old chap. Had to be done. I don't like doing it."

And he didn't. That is what counted. It hurt him more than it hurt me.

But to get back to the scheme of things, the deliberate planning and adjusting of the human relationship between father and son.

To begin with, in order to help the boy to build, you must build with him. You must see the child in yourself, and yourself in the son. It is both a double and a deliberate creation, a leading forth of self-expression through love and understanding. To expect a son to be a man when you yourself are a poor sort of man is foolishness, an impertinence. If you cannot show your son courage, steadfastness, justice, wisdom, the good temper of the loser, the playfulness of the playfellow, of what use is your ideal? A boy seeks a hero.

It seems to me that the relationship should pass through these periods, that of Father, Big Brother, Friend.

A Changing Relationship

A man should adapt to the growth of the son. The relationship must change, and it is just because so many men cannot or forget to change that the relationship is wrecked. It should grow with the boy. The father's ultimate aim should be the creation of a fine and steadfast friendship, not an autocracy. Autocracies end in revolution, and there are revolts in families as well as in states.

Let us take in succession the three phases of father, big brother, friend. They are three and yet one. In *Sorrell & Son*, Stephen Sorrell was a different Stephen Sorrell, and yet the same man to Kit's boy and lad and grown man. Both father and son understood love and compassion.

Stephen Sorrell was a human creature, man as well as father, and Kit even as a small boy was aware of his father as a very human man. He saw him shabby and worried, and overworked and in pain, and yet enduring. Children are capable of great tenderness and

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a human creature, man Kit even as a small boy as a very human man. and worried, and over- an, and yet enduring. of great tenderness and

cular insight. There may be more of compassionate friend in your boy than suspect. I can remember a little Scotch school seriously and gently explaining personal economies because the old pater not too well off. I can remember the then thrill of affection and respect, I—a fellow—conceived for that other little boy's frankness and courage and lack of obbery. Nor was he laughed at.

My own father made me aware of his humanity in that first period of our relationship. He had a high sense of duty; he was

able and beloved doctor. He gave every Sunday afternoon to a class of young men and boys, and he showed them Christ as he saw Christ. But he was no pedant, no prig. He could laugh; he had a great sense of fun; he could play. He would rush out for five minutes after a consultation, and bowl a cricket ball to him in the garden. There were occasions when I saw him angry and to me—the child—his anger was right and impressive. His wrath was nearly always a generous emotion roused by some piece of meanness or dishonesty or churlishness. He could not abide uncleanness. He spoke out. I can

remember being told of a card party on a Saturday night, and of a certain parson who sat down to cards and who told pornographic stories, and how the Christ in my father used a scourge. He said: "So-and-so, how you can sit here and tell filthy tales, and then go in the morning to administer the Sacrament—passes my understanding."

So, this first phase and during the years of my childhood I had created for me a love and admiration for this man. I believed in him, trusted him, and I cannot remember any occasion when he failed me. I cannot recall any occasion when I had cause to feel

the shrinking shame of the sensitive child. My father had his plan. He taught Christ, and tried to live as he believed, and I too believed, because I believed in my father.

Then came the second period. I would put the years between fourteen and twenty-one. It is the loutish period, smudged with sex and the young arrogancies and restlessnesses of sex. It is full of crude, blurring, inarticulate self-assertion. The young male creature is growing up. He is at school and college with other young male creatures, boys and men some of whom have indifferent and

sensational fathers.

I think it is the most difficult period of the three, difficult for both father and son. The boy's critical faculties develop. He begins to see his father a little differently, and sometimes with a vague feeling of hostility. The father will need all his patience, his wisdom, and his magnanimity. He will need to remember that same loutish period in his own youth, and to see it again in his son, and to make allowances.

To many fathers this loutish period when sex develops a snout appears either as inevitable and so to be accepted, or as an unpleasant phase to be ignored. Per-

haps that rather delightful little comrade has turned into an awkward, self-conscious, difficult lad who develops spots and blushes and strange silences. Some of the candour has gone from the fellowship. The boy may have secrets, disharmonies of his own. He is man and yet not man. His urges and the demands of the conventions are at cross purposes. And often the father shirks the sex in his son. He suffers from a sort of shame-faced feeling that the boy has found things out, things which had been kept secret. It is no use reading the Athanasian Creed in the face of raw sex.



An early portrait of Warwick Deeping

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Here—I believe—the man should drop some of the attributes of the father and try a kind of big brotherliness. “I have been through the same business myself, old lad. It’s not easy. But you will get a grip of yourself again later on. We can’t help sex. The thing is to try and keep it clean and in hand. Keep fit. Don’t get run away with. Don’t gorge. And the less you let yourself think about it, the less you will be troubled.”

A Difficult Period

But it is a difficult period. The young, flexible character is shaken by urges, desires, vanities. The young male is full of the wine of self. He wants to assert himself, to show off, to be first. His voice has an aggressive note. If he belongs to the great unlicked he shouts and argues. If he is prevented from shouting and shouldering he may be sullen.

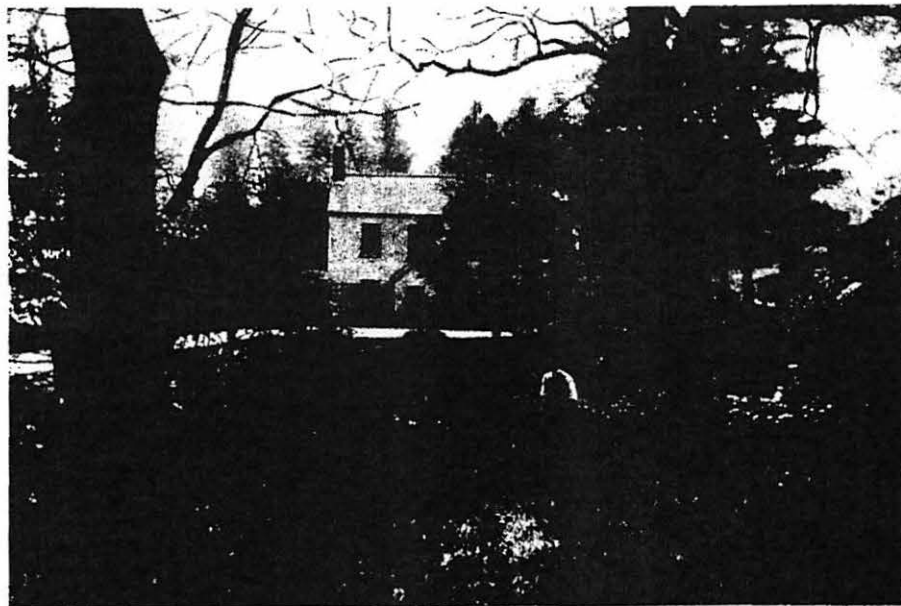
He needs wise handling. He is up against realities in himself, and to the father who talks priggery and platitudes he will not listen. The Big Brother must accept the realities.

For, often, the lad longs to be helped. Sex is a shock to many sensitive natures. The whole atmosphere of life has changed, and the old childish reactions have been jarred and perhaps broken. That wonder at himself and at the new world may become an unwholesome curiosity, a secret prying.

What is this strange, mysterious thing? What is woman? What of mother and sisters? In the old days of Victorianism there was silence, a kind of solemn, scared, Sunday hush. The little fellow was ushered into the world of sex by other fellows, and not too happily. It was a round-the-corner business.

This should not be. Were a father to see his son heading towards a precipice would he not warn him? And sex is a sort of precipice.

Sorrell and his son had a pact of “No secrets.” Their comradeship confessed itself in candour, though life is too subtle a business for complete candour. Also, every personality must have its reticences, its solitary and sacred places into which no other self penetrates. But I do believe that frankness and sincerity between father and son in facing life’s problems can be of infinite significance to both son and father. No one wishes to make a wilful mess of living; we are pushed into our messes; the very wilderness of self is full of adventure, splendid or otherwise. So often a lack of candour means a lack of courage. Perhaps we have suffered shames and defeats, and we fear to suffer them again in the persons of our sons. We shirk and are silent. We hope and assume that the lad will muddle through. Life may be a matter of muddling



Warwick Deeping's home at Weybridge

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through, but we don't run our railways
or our stores on those lines.

The Question of a Career

Then, towards the end of this most difficult period comes the question of the son's career. What is to be done about it? How much should it be the son's choice and how much the father's? Boys vary in their feeling for the future and their sense of responsibility. A very few have definite and practical ideas; others have very definite but quite impractical ideas. Perhaps they want to be racing motorists or wireless experts, or something interesting and boyish and easy. Then there is the boy whose mind is a blank as to the inevitable earning of a living. He has no positive urge in any particular direction, and in these cases the choice is left almost wholly to the father. The boy has to be inserted into one of the many niches of this workaday world, and the choice may be a question of utility, opportunity and common sense. Such cases are somewhat mechanical.

The choice is far more complex with the two other extremes, the young enthusiast and the rotter. I am not so much concerned with the rotter; we all know him; we have all watched his driftings, his young, selfish, savage inaptitudes. But the complete rotter is rather rare, and often he is something of a mental case with his unsocial instabilities and his irresponsible egotism. He needs a book and investigations all to himself.

But the young enthusiast, the possible future expert is a very different problem. He is the problem, fascinating, fearful, precious, for his particular enthusiasm may appear so perilous and new to the father. It may seem like a tilting at windmills, a putting to sea in a small open boat. And how is the father to know whether the son has the great stuff in him, or is only a dear, fervid dreamer?

In the case of the Sorrells the issue was clear. Kit's enthusiasm was a practicable enthusiasm, and Stephen Sorrell was able to supply the faith and the funds. All this had been part of his plan. He had helped in the creating of the frank, clean sturdiness of the boy, and when he saw the character of his son launched and tested, he saw that it was good. The creation of "character" is so much more important than the creation of mere cleverness, and especially so in the case of a boy who is taking up a scientific career. The



Warwick Deeping's Father

man behind the microscope and the scalpel should have that incorruptible sincerity that refuses to compromise. You cannot be political in a chemistry lab., and the more the sincerity of the scientific searcher is spread among us the better it will be for our human relationships.

No Room for Pessimism

I read somewhere that "Sorrell & Son" might have been great literature had Kit turned out a rotter and fooled all his father's devotion. That is the highbrow touch. It is the self-conscious smirk of a pasturing cleverness. To be the artist you should be the pessimist. What wilful and craven nonsense! Your clever people want to seize on the exceptional case and hold it up as typical of life. It isn't. Thousands of decent boys make good to the one rotter who supplies the so-called realist with material for great literature. The highbrows would have preferred Judas Iscariot to the eleven dull, devoted, conventional apostles! Judas had a temperament; he was intriguing. All those details about the thirty pieces of silver and

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his bursting asunder would have provided the nice nastiness beloved of the hyper-clever. But, personally, I have always preferred the hot-hearted, cowardly, courageous, cursing old Peter.

A Choice Thrust Upon Him

Now, my own father had this very choice thrust upon him. I was the son of a doctor; I had displayed no special aptitudes; therefore—obviously—I was to follow in my father's steps and become a doctor. I was docile; I agreed; I set out to become a doctor. I worked fairly hard; I went from college to hospital, but meanwhile something happened. My eyes were opened to other things: beauty, the stars, sunsets—all the mystery of life and its adventure. The urge stirred in me. I began to write. I began with poetry, and much of it was very bad poetry. I went on to the romantic, colour novel. But I kept the two careers apart. I passed all my exams; I became a doctor; I went into practice as an assistant to gain experience.

Somehow I managed to produce a novel which was accepted by a publisher. I knew now that I wanted to be a novelist, but a young man has to live; I had to cut my cable and take the risk of putting to sea.

My father had to take that same risk. He took it with me, and in taking it showed an affection and an understanding that were not the products of pessimism.

He said to me in affect: "Come home, write, live with us and try the adventure."

Two Precious Years

I wanted to pay my mother and my father for my keep, but he would not hear of it. I accepted. And he gave me two years, two precious years, a breathing space, and at the end of those two years I was able to marry the woman I loved and make a little workshop of my own. We were poor; we had struggles, but we came through.

My father had shown me the faith of a great friendship. He took the risk with me. Never again had I to ask him for a penny.

Which brings the relationship to the last phase, that of a durable and fine friendship, for that should be the father's final part in the relationship; the part of a friend. He should have left autocracy behind him. He has given wisely. He has been no fool father, fussily authoritative, and neither too mean nor too generous. He has tried to understand,

and remembering his own youth, to make allowances.

He has made a friend. But how few fathers and sons succeed in bringing that friendship to fruition. The elder man tries to grasp, the younger to free himself from the clutch. The old wisdoms are still so sure; they remain the foundations. Other men laid them, and it is for us to carry the building higher.

For in this friendship the father learns as well as the son. My father had to accept certain newnesses from me, and he did accept them. It was the young generation. We had our differences, our estrangement, and a reconciliation that was not without its humour. I saw the humour of it; my father did not, for it was he who had to surrender. The dear old man did not like it, and was all the more human for not liking it.

A Warm-Hearted Soul

But he was a warm-hearted soul. His plan still mattered, and he watched it as father and friend. I can remember him coming to meet me when my wife and I returned from our honeymoon. He gave me a quick, impulsive kiss, a man's kiss—so rare and significant, and I seemed to have a sudden understanding of his tenderness. I was to him still something of the little fellow of three. "How is it with you, my son? How will it be with you? What of to-morrow, and the many to-morrows?"

So this friendship matured. It outlasted religious differences, changed points of view, opposed social opinions. I know there were times when the new man in me pained the man in my father; it had to be; I had to be myself. We accepted each other; we differed as friends differ; the relationship was solid and secure.

The Last Phase

Then came the last phase of all when I in my turn could give back in my smaller way something of that which my father had given to me. The fatal thing smote him; he was doomed. It was a slow and a ghastly business; he suffered abominably, but he suffered like a great man. His faith stood sure. I never heard him complain; he continued to think of others.

I used to ride in seven miles nearly every day. If it was fine he was carried downstairs and placed in a wheeled chair, and I used to trundle him round his beloved garden. There was a steepish path and a step going down to a

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lawn, and one day I hurt myself in lowering the chair down that step. I remember the sudden glance of concern and compassion he gave me, he—the dying and suffering man. It was a look that one never forgets.

I stood by my father to the end. It was a chastly business, yet poignantly beautiful. I was worn out and ragged. I knew that he wanted to die, and I wanted him to die. He was suffering too much, and uselessly. It was a martyrdom.

I stood by him as Kit stood by his father. That is why I know. One does certain things with blurred eyes, a shaking hand, but with a sure heart. When he died the dawn was coming up, and the sky was all grey, and I stood at the window of his room. The relationship was over, but not the memory of it. I went and held my mother's hand. We said nothing.

The Pattern Traced Through

Looking back now upon the relationship I see the whole pattern of it clearly outlined. It began with a few simple lines, the life of a happy child in a happy home, loving and trusting the man who was his father. That early ground-work lasted throughout the whole weaving of the piece. Its simple scrolls and loops were blurred in the middle period when youth was full of the raw confusion of sex, and the colours were crude. But again in the last phase these early markings reappear with a tranquil and glowing distinctness, mixing with all the more complex flowering of manhood, and linking things up. Happy is the man who had such strong and simple strands running through the pattern of all his strivings and his sinings, his doubts and his ideals, knitting together the whole texture. Old-fashioned people used to speak of moral fibre; I would prefer to call these fibres of character stout yet sensitive human threads.

Life becomes more and more of a complex business, an ordered confusion, and men are apt to become bewildered, oppressed. Old faiths crumble. There are times when we feel that we have our feet in the wet sand. We stand and observe the squalid, noisy sensationalism of much of our modern life, and we are apt to doubt and to wonder. Drink, eat and be merry, and make money,

for to-morrow we die. But I do not believe that we are the sport of an illusion. Society in the mass, as I see it at present, is in that middle period of its raw, loutish, insurgent youth. Like youth it does not know what it wants.

For the moment we have lost our Father. The face of the Christ is veiled; we have ceased to be little children, looking upward and believing. We have lost our feeling for the great father in man. We have been spoilt by the too sudden deluge of what we call our discoveries. We rather resemble a crowd of unfinished boys tinkering at and speeding with our new toys.

But I take it that we shall traverse this phase. We shall rediscover the Father. We shall become friends with him, and with ourselves. Just at present we are not very good friends with ourselves. We are restless; we feel insecure; we quarrel and argue and shout. We are too full of loutishness, too uncomfortably self-assertive, too greedy. We don't quite know where we are, or what is worth while.

To a Wider Serenity

We shall get through this phase. The old, simple threads will reappear to bind together the various and confused weavings of this very hurrying life of ours. We shall emerge from the scramble to a wider serenity. We shall rediscover the simpler strands. We shall know the few simple things that matter: love, and compassion, and beauty within and without, the fine surface of character that may be scarred, but will not be broken.

Character, an ever-increasing consciousness, more and more understanding, a new humility. We shall add our store to the past, and bequeath it to our children and our children's children.

Let the father and son relationship continue and increase in a new frankness and a new understanding. Let us be able to believe in our fathers, and so believe in ourselves and our sons.

My own father gave me belief in man as man. Nothing can take it away. It has a kind of immortality.

What I would ask of a father is that he should give his son a belief in man.



RED BOOK July 1928
Same as Nov 28
GIVEN

Father and Son

An invaluable look into life, with a bit of the autobiography of the man whom all English-reading people love because he wrote "Sorrrell and Son."

By
Warwick Deeping

Illustrations by Austin Jewell

THIS civilization of ours is man-made. It is man's creation, conceived and imposed upon the nature of things.

In the early days it was Nature who ruled. She said: "Beget, go forth and multiply. Conquer and kill. The earth is to those who multiply and are cunning."

But through the centuries man has been conceiving and creating. He ceased to be wholly the child of blind, mysterious urges. He became self-conscious man, self-conscious as husband and as father. Slowly we have created our human relationships; they are as much our creations, and as willed, as our buildings and our bridges and our airplanes.

All this is obvious; but what we forget is that now today and tomorrow we are creating society, altering, remodeling, beautifying. Nothing remains as it was, and these human relationships of ours, love, marriage, fatherhood, are changing.

We plan. We will. And more and more consciously do we do these things.

Yet what a mess do some of us continue to make of these human relationships. What a mess is made of marriage, of fatherhood and sonship. Some of us still act out of our primitive, tribal selves. We may be moderns in our engineering, in our music, in our science, but when it comes to matters of the heart we behave like the "old man" of the tribe, the primeval tyrant. We give away our plan, and our self-conscious creating, and run amuck among the old instinctive urges.

Need it be so? Is man no more than body, a mass of behavior, the creature of his physiology? Can we not plan and will?

Life is a personal affair, vividly and poignantly personal. If I utter the word "father," I do not call up the vision of any man; I see my father. Once again I am the little fellow looking up at the big fellow. He was the first man I knew. The dead are with us, and in these later years I seem to see my father more clearly and understandingly than when I was a younger man. I see him as he must have seen me in the greater wisdom of his years. One learns by looking back.

I remember a day when my father was dead, and



Photo by Little & Co. Ltd., London

WARWICK
DEEPIING



The father of Mr. Deeping....
"In these later years I see my father more understandingly."

my mother and I were looking through old letters and papers, and I came upon a poem of my father's written upon me when I was a little fellow of three or so. Strange to stand and look at your small self through your father's eyes, and to realize the mystery of life as he saw it in you! My father asked questions. What would this little fellow become? What would he make of life?

It is very clear to me now that my father was one of those men who had a plan. He had an ideal, and he willed himself toward it through the busy years of his life. He did not merely "behave." He was what one used to call a religious man; that is to say, his plan was the Christ plan, and the pattern of it was evident through all his living. With him religion was not gloom and repression; it was a sunny outlook, compassionate and happy. He believed in self-restraint, and there is all the difference in the world between self-discipline and repression.

But a plan is not a mere pattern on paper. It is alive, and a man has to live it; my father lived it, and when I look back, I realize how successfully he did so.

I was a happy child, and I owe that happiness to my parents. They lived out their plan, and I—the little fellow—began my life by living it with them in that little old Georgian house overlooking the sea. My father was a busy doctor, my mother the busy housewife of those days.

I loved my father. To me he was a very great man, yet human and mortal. Somehow I seemed to know that my father was mortal. I can remember moments of childish panic when I was afraid that something had happened to him. They used horses in those days, and sometimes when he was late, I would go out and stand in the road and listen for the sound of horses' hoofs.

rounding the end of the terrace; and when—at last—I heard them, I would rush in to my mother.

He's coming.

Simple, sensitive reactions! And perhaps we can count ourselves fortunate if some of this simplicity remains with us in the force of our years. Reading a review of the film of "Sorrrell & Son," I was gently amused by the title. "This father-and-son business which is so prevalent in second-class English fiction." Why should love be second class? Why, if you have had a first-class father, should it be shameful and second class to say so? Why should the believing in something be a sign of literary sophistication? To be a highbrow, must one question everything and end by believing in nothing?

For, to begin with, what better heritage can a child receive from its parents than physical health and happiness, and faith in those same parents? It is better to begin with faith. No man who has had a happy childhood can be wholly disillusioned; nor can good memories be taken from him. He will have the memo-

ries of the little fellow who looked up to the big fellow and was not disappointed. He will remember those boyish episodes, the first going to school, that anguishing moment when the schoolhouse door closed, and the father was gone, for three months, three everlasting months. He will remember those occasional thrashings wisely and compassionately given.

"I'm sorry, dad."
"That's all right, old chap. Had to be done. I don't like doing it."

And he didn't. That is what counted.

But to get back to the scheme of things, the deliberate planning and adjusting of the human relationship between father and son.

To begin with, in order to help the boy to build, you must build with him. You must see the child in yourself, and yourself in the son. It is both a double and a deliberate creation, a leading forth of self-expression through love and understanding. To expect a son to be a man when you yourself are a poor sort of man is foolishness, an impertinence. If you cannot show your son courage, steadfastness, justice, wisdom, the good temper of the loser, the playfulness of the playfellow, of what use is your ideal? A boy seeks a hero.

It seems to me that the relationship should pass through three periods, that of Father, Big Brother, Friend.

A man should adapt to the growth of the son. The relationship must change, and it is just because so many men cannot or forget to change that the relationship is wrecked. It should grow with the boy. The father's ultimate aim should be the creation of a fine and steadfast friendship, not an autocracy. Autocracies end in revolution, and there are revolts in families as well as in states.

Let us take in succession the three phases of father, big brother, friend. They are three and yet one. In "Sorrrell & Son," Stephen Sorrell was a different Stephen Sorrell, and yet the same man to Kit's boy and lad and grown man. Both father and son understood love and compassion.

Stephen Sorrell was a human creature, man as well as father, and Kit even as a small boy was aware of his father as a very human man. He saw him shabby and worried, and overworked and in pain, and yet enduring. Children are capable of great tenderness and of peculiar insight. There may be more of the compassionate friend in your boy than you suspect. I can remember a little Scotch lad at school seriously and gently explaining



The young male is full of the wine of self. He wants to assert himself, to show off, to be first.

his personal economies because the old pater was not too well off. I can remember the sudden thrill of affection and respect for that other little fellow's frankness and courage and lack of snobbery. Nor was he laughed at.

My own father made me aware of his humanity in that first period of our relationship. He had a high sense of duty; he was the able and beloved doctor. He gave every Sunday afternoon to a class of

young men and boys, and he showed them Christ as he saw Christ. But he was no pedant, no prig. He could laugh; he had a great sense of fun; he could play. He would rush out for five minutes after a consultation, and bowl a cricket-ball to us in the garden. There were occasions when

I saw him angry; and to me—the child—his anger was right and impressive. His wrath was nearly always a generous emotion roused by some piece of meanness or dishonesty or churlishness. He could not abide unkindness. He spoke out.

So in this first phase and during the years of my childhood I had created for me a love and admiration for this man. I believed in him, trusted him, and I cannot remember any occasion when he failed me. I cannot recall any occasion when I had cause to feel the shrinking shame of the sensitive child. My father had his plan. He taught Christ, and tried to live as he believed, and I too believed, because I believed in my father.

Then came the second period. I would put the years between fourteen and twenty-one. It is the loutish period, smudged with sex, and the young arrogances and restlessness of sex. It is full of crude, blurring, inarticulate self-assertion. The young male creature is growing up. He is at school and college with other young male creatures, boys and men, some of whom have indifferent and sensational fathers.

I think it is the most difficult period of the three, difficult for both father and son. The boy's critical faculties develop. He begins to see his father a little differently, and sometimes with a vague feeling of hostility. The father will need all his patience, his wisdom and his magnanimity.

(Continued on page 108)



We observe the sensuality of our modern life. Society, like youth, does not know what it wants.



Soften its penalties with Sal Hepatica

SOME one has justly called this twentieth century the "Age of Indiscretions."

And we certainly deserve the reproach for our many violations of the a-b-c's of health—for the things we do that nature never intended that we should.

We eat rich food and too much of it. We take only fitful exercise. We hurry and we worry. We skimp on sleep. Anxious not to miss anything—eager to be on the go, we drive our bodies all too often on our store of nervous energy.

And so we pay the piper—pay him in the way we look and in the way we feel. We awake unrefreshed by slumber. Our digestion fails us. Headaches are common. We become irritable—nervous.

To dispel these old familiar symptoms—headache and indigestion, acidity, constipation and bad complexion—there is nothing quite so simple or so good as a heaping teaspoonful of Sal Hepatica in a glass of water. Take it on arising.

A gentle, effervescent saline, Sal Hepatica cleanses the intestines promptly—usually within a half hour. It sweeps away accumulated food wastes and the poisons they set up. It helps you start the day fresh and physically fit.

Sal Hepatica is a standby in millions of homes. Keep a bottle always on hand.

Sal Hepatica

The Sparkling Effervescent Saline

© 1928

FATHER AND SON

(Continued from page 67)

He will need to remember that same loutish period in his own youth, and to see it again in his son, and to make allowances.

To many fathers this loutish period when sex develops a snout appears either as inevitable and so to be accepted, or as an unpleasant phase to be ignored. Perhaps that rather delightful little comrade has turned into an awkward, self-conscious, difficult lad who develops spots and blushes and strange silences. Some of the candor has gone from the fellowship. The boy may have secrets, disharmonies of his own. He is man and yet not man. His urges and the demands of the conventions are at cross purposes. And often the father shirks the sex in his son. He suffers from a sort of shamed feeling that the boy has found things out, things which had been kept secret. It is no use reading the Athanasian Creed in the face of raw sex.

Here, I believe, the man should drop some of the attributes of the father, and try a kind of big brotherliness. "I have been through the same business myself, old lad. It's not so easy. But you will get a grip of yourself again later on. We can't help sex. The thing is to try and keep it clean and in hand. Keep fit. Don't get run away with. Don't gorge. And the less you let yourself think about it, the less you will be troubled."

But it is a difficult period. The young, flexible character is shaken by urges, desires, vanities. The young male is full of the wine of self. He wants to assert himself, to show off, to be first. His voice has an aggressive note. It belongs to the great unlicked, he shouts and argues. If he is prevented from shouting and shouldering, he may be sullen.

He needs wise handling. He is up against realities in himself, to the father who talks prizes and platitudes he will not listen. The Big Brother must accept the reality.

For often the lad longs to be helped. Sex is a shock to many sensitive natures. The whole atmosphere of life has changed, and the old childish reactions have been jarred and perhaps broken. That wonder at himself and at the new world may become an unwholesome curiosity, a secret prying. What is this strange, mysterious thing? What is woman? What of mother and sister? In the old days of Victorianism there was silence, a kind of solemn, scared, Sunday hush. The little fellow was ushered into the world of sex by other fellows, and not too happily. It was a round-the-corner business. Were a father to see his son heading toward a precipice, would he not warn him? And sex is a sort of precipice.

Sorrell and his son had a part of "No secrets." Their comradeship confessed itself in candor, though life is too subtle a business for complete candor. Also, every personality must have its reticences, its solitary and sacred places into which no other self penetrates. But I do believe that frankness and sincerity between father and son in facing life's problems can be of infinite significance to both son and father. No one wishes to make a willful mess of living; we are pulled into our messes; the very wilderness of self is full of adventure, splendid or otherwise. So often a lack of candor means a lack of courage. Perhaps we have suffered shame and defeats, and we fear to suffer them again in the persons of our sons. We shrink and are silent. We hope and assume that the lad will muddle through. Life may be a matter of muddling through, but we don't run our railways or our stores on those lines.

Then, toward the end of this most difficult period, comes the question of the son's career. What is to be done about it? How much should it be the son's choice, and how much the father's? Boys vary in their feeling for the future and their sense of responsibility. A very few have definite and practical ideas; others have very definite but

quite impractical ideas. Perhaps they want to be racing motorists or wireless experts, or something interesting and boyish and easy. Then there is the boy whose mind is a blank as to the inevitable earning of a living. He has no positive urge in any particular direction, and in these cases the choice is left almost wholly to the father. The boy has to be inserted into one of the many niches of this workaday world, and the choice may be a question of utility, opportunity and common sense. Such cases are somewhat mechanical.

The choice is far more complex with the two other extremes, the young enthusiast and the rotter. I am not so much concerned with the rotter, we all know him, we have all watched his drifts, his young, selfish, savage ineptitudes. But the complete rotter is rather rare, and often, he is something of a mental case with his unocial instabilities and his irresponsible ecstasies. He needs a book and investigations all to himself.

But the young enthusiast, the possible future expert, is a very different problem. He is the problem, fascinating, fearful, precious, for his particular enthusiasm may appear perilous and new to the father. It may seem like a tilting at windmills, a putting to sea in a small open boat. And how is the father to know whether the son has the great stuff in him, or is only a dear, fervid dreamer?

In the case of the Sorrells the issue was clear. Karl's enthusiasm was a practicable enthusiasm, and Stephen Sorrell was able to supply the faith and the funds. He had helped in creating the trunk, clean sturdiness of the boy, and when he saw the character of his son launched and tested, he saw that it was good. The creation of character is so much more important than the creation of mere cleverness, and especially so in the case of a boy who is taking up a scientific career. The man behind the microscope and the scalpel should have that incorruptible sincerity that refuses to compromise. You cannot be political in a chemistry lab, and the more the sincerity of the scientific searcher is spread among us, the better it will be for our human relationships.

I read somewhere that "Sorrell and Son" might have been great literature had Karl turned out a rotter and fooled all his father's devotion. That is the highbrow touch. It is the self-conscious smirk of a posturing cleverness. To be the artist, you should be the pessimist. What willful and craven nonsense! Your clever people want to score on the exceptional case, and hold it up as typical of life. It isn't. Thousands of decent boys make good, to the one rotter who supplies the so-called realist with material for great literature. The highbrows would have preferred Judas Iscariot to the eleven dull, devoted, conventional apostles.

I WAS the son of a doctor, I had displayed no special aptitudes, therefore—obviously—I was to follow in my father's steps and become a doctor. I was docile; I agreed, I set out to become a doctor. I worked fairly hard, I went from college to hospital, but meanwhile something happened. My eyes were opened to other things—beauty, the stars, sunsets, all the mysteries of life and its adventure. The stars stared in me. I began to write. I began with poetry, and much of it was very bad poetry. I went on to the romantic, color novel. But I kept the two careers apart. I passed all my exams; I became a doctor; I went into practice as an assistant to gain experience.

Somehow I managed to produce a novel which was accepted by a publisher. I knew now that I wanted to be a novelist; but a young man has to live. I had to cut my cable and take the risk of putting to sea.



New York City
"You would think that athletes would keep in perfect health without any trouble. But as every man who has trained for an athletic team knows, that is by no means always true. In spite of training table food, a fellow often gets irregular in his elimination. Another big trouble is boils."

"I found that eating Fleischmann's Yeast kept me in perfect condition to stroke the Columbia crew. Every member of the 1916 crew, which I captained, ate Yeast regularly."

ERIC C. LAMBERT

Utah
Salt Lake City, Utah

"I am thirteen years old. I had stomach trouble, and when we sat down to meals Mother nearly always warned me not to eat this or that or I would have indigestion."

"Mother had taken Fleischmann's Yeast to make her skin clear. After she had used it for some time the doctor and her friends spoke of how lovely her complexion looked. Her wonderful results with Yeast made her buy it for the rest of us."

"Since eating it regularly I have never been troubled with indigestion. I am grateful that I know about Fleischmann's Yeast."

MARCELLA ANDERSON



"... so 'logy'"

I could hardly keep awake"

Cincinnati, Ohio

"Long hours of concentration on an engineering job often means irregular meals, lack of exercise—and consequent digestive trouble."

"After twenty-five years of this kind of work I got so bad I saw I would have to do something about my health. I was nervous and overweight. After a meal I would feel so drowsy I could hardly keep awake—just 'logy,' I guess, from auto-intoxication."

"Last February I decided to try Fleischmann's Yeast. My doctor encouraged me. In two months my weight was back to normal, my nerves were steadier, I was more alert and vigorous than I've been in years!"

OLIVER H. SCHLEMMER



MR. OLIVER H. SCHLEMMER (above, at left)

Easy, natural—this new way to health:

Eat three cakes of Fleischmann's Yeast every day, one before each meal or between meals; plain, or in water or any other way you like. For stubborn constipation drink one cake in a glass of hot water—not scalding—before each meal and before going to bed. And train yourself to form a regular daily habit.



WHEN you are "logy," run down, your whole body is being flooded with poisons from stagnating food wastes.

Fleischmann's Yeast rouses the sluggish intestines, keeps them clean without exhausting you as cathartics do. That is because yeast is a food—as fresh as new spinach or any garden vegetable. When normal elimination is restored, your appetite picks up. Digestion improves. Your skin becomes healthy, fresh-looking.

Buy 2 or 3 days' supply of Fleischmann's Yeast at a time from your grocer and keep in any cool, dry place. Write for booklet on Yeast in the diet—free. Health Research Dept., M-54, The Fleischmann Co., 701 Washington St., New York.



A Sunproof Complexion

You can enjoy all the delightful outdoor sports and still be confident that your appearance will not be blemished by the sun or wind. Gouraud's Oriental Cream renders an entrancing film of pearly beauty which affords positive protection to the complexion. Just think! An unusually attractive appearance that will not "rub off", streak, spot or show signs of perspiration can be secured instantly. No messy "rubbing in" or tedious treatments necessary.

The highly antiseptic and astringent action Gouraud's Oriental Cream exerts makes its use particularly helpful in treating blemishes, skin troubles, freckles, wrinkles, tan, flabbiness, redness, muddy skins and similar conditions. Made in White, Flesh and Rachel.

GOURAUD'S ORIENTAL CREAM

"Beauty's Master Touch"

Send 10c. for Trial Size

TERD. T. HOPKINS & SON, New York City
430 Lafayette Street

Check shade desired: White (1) Flesh (2) Rachel (3)

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

My father had to take that same risk. He took it with me, and in taking it showed an affection and an understanding that were not the products of pessimism.

He said to me in effect: "Come home, write, live with us and try the adventure."

I wanted to pay my mother and father for my keep, but he would not hear of it. I accepted. And he gave me two years, two precious years, a breathing space, and at the end of those two years I was able to marry the woman I loved and make a little workshop of my own. We were poor, we had struggles, but we came through.

My father had shown me the faith of a great friendship. He took the risk with me. Never again had I to ask him for a penny.

Which brings the relationship to the last phase, that of a durable and fine friendship, for that should be the father's final part of the relationship, the part of friend. He should have left autonomy behind him. He has given wisely. He has been no fool father, fussy authoritative, and neither too mean nor too generous. He has tried to understand, and remembering his own youth, to make allowances.

He has made a friend. But how few fathers and sons succeed in bringing that friendship to fruition! The elder man tries to grasp, the younger to free himself from the clutch. The old wisdoms are still so sure; they remain the foundations. Other men laid them, and it is for us to carry the building higher.

For in this friendship the father learns as well as the son. My father had to accept certain newnesses from me, and he did accept them. It was the young generation. We had our differences, one estrangement, and a reconciliation that was not without its humor. I saw the humor of it; my father did not, for it was he who had to surrender. The dear old man did not like it, and was all the more human for not liking it.

But he was a warm-hearted soul. His plan still mattered, and he watched it as a father and friend. I can remember him coming to meet me when my wife and I returned from our honeymoon. He gave me a quick, impulsive kiss, a man's kiss—so rare and significant; and I seemed to have a sudden understanding of his tenderness. I was to him still something of the little fellow of three. "How is it with you, my son?" How will it be with you? What of tomorrow, and the many tomorrows?

So this friendship matured. It outlasted religious differences, changed points of view, opposed social opinions. I know there were times when the new man in me pained the man in my father; it had to be; I had to be myself. We accepted each other; we differed as friends differ, the relationship was solid and secure.

Then came the last phase of all when I in my turn could give back in my smaller way something of that which my father had given to me. The fatal thing smote him; he was doomed. It was a slow and a ghastly business, he suffered abominably, but he suffered like a great man. His faith stood sure. I never heard him complain, he continued to think of others.

I used to ride in seven miles nearly every day. It was late, he was carried down stairs and placed in a wheeled chair, and I used to trouble him round his beloved garden. There was a steepish path and a step going down to a lawn, and one day I hurt myself in lowering the chair down that step. I remember the sudden glance of concern and compassion he gave me—he, the dying and suffering man. It was a look that our never forgets.

I stood by my father to the end. It was a ghastly business, yet poignantly beautiful. I was worn out and tarred. I knew that he wanted to die, and I wanted him to die. He was suffering too much, and uselessly. It was a martyrdom.

I stood by him as Kit stood by his father. That is why I know. One does certain things with blurred eyes, a shaking hand, but with a sure heart. When he died, the dawn was coming up, and the sky was all gray, and I stood at the window of his room. The relationship was over, but not the memory of it. I went and held my mother's hand. We said nothing.

Looking back now upon the relationship, I see the whole pattern of it clearly outlined. It began with a few simple lines, the life of a happy child in a happy home, loving and trusting the man who was his father. That early groundwork lasted throughout the whole weaving of the piece. Its simple scrolls and loops were blurred in the middle period when youth was full of the raw confusion of sex, and the colors were crude. But again in the last phase these early markings reappear with a tranquil and glowing distinctness, mixing with all the more complex flowering of manhood, and linking things up. Happy is the man who has such strong and simple strands running through the pattern of all his strivings and his sinning, his doubts and his ideals, knitting together the whole texture. Old-fashioned people used to speak of moral fiber; I would prefer to call these fibers of character stout yet sensitive human threads.

LIFE becomes more and more a complex business, an ordered confusion, and men are apt to become bewildered, oppressed. Old faiths crumble. There are times when we feel that we have our feet in the wet sand. We stand and observe the squalid, noisy sensationism of much of our modern life, and we are apt to doubt and to wonder. Drink, eat and be merry, and make money, for tomorrow we die. But I do not believe that we are the sport of an illusion. Society in the mass, as I see it at present, is in that middle period of its raw, loutish insecure youth. Like youth it does not know what it wants.

For the moment we have lost our Father. The face of the Christ is veiled, we have ceased to be little children, looking upward and believing. We have lost our feeling for the great father in man. We have been spoiled by the too sudden deluge of what we call our discoveries. We rather resemble a crowd of unfinished boys tinkering at and speeding with our new toys.

But I take it that we shall traverse this phase. We shall rediscover the Father. We shall become friends with him, and with our selves. Just at present we are not very good friends with ourselves. We are restless, we feel insecure; we quarrel and argue and shout. We are too full of doubtfulness, too uncomfortably self-assertive, too greedy. We don't quite know where we are, or what is worth while.

We shall get through this phase. The old, simple threads will reappear to bind together the various and confused weavings of this very hurrying life of ours. We shall emerge from the scramble to a wiser serenity. We shall rediscover the simpler strands. We shall know the few simple things that matter, love, and compassion, and beauty within and without, the fine surface of character that may be scarred, but will not be broken.

Character, an ever-increasing consciousness, more and more understanding, a new humility. We shall add our store to the past, and bequeath it to our children and our children's children.

Let the father-and-son relationship continue and increase in a new frankness and a new understanding. Let us be able to be better in our fathers, and so believe in ourselves and our sons.

My own father gave me belief in man as a man. Nothing can take it away. It has a kind of immortality.

What I would ask of a father is that he should give his son a belief in man.

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